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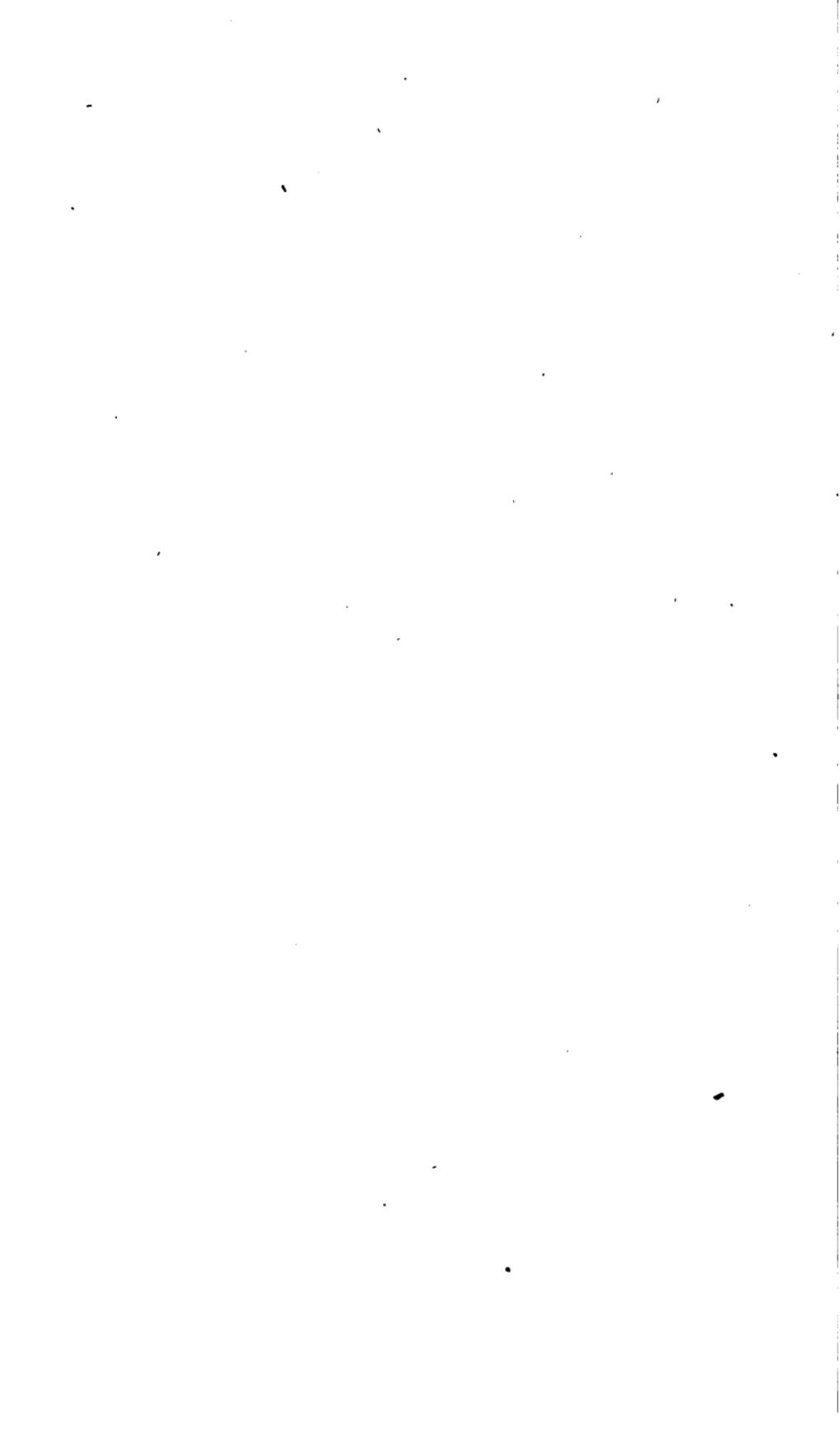
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FROM

W. S. Appleton,
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7 May, 1894.

W.B.A



POSTHUMOUS SERMONS.

BY THE

REV. HENRY BLUNT, A.M.,

LATE RECTOR OF STREATHAM;

AND FORMERLY FELLOW OF PEMBROKE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Vol. I.

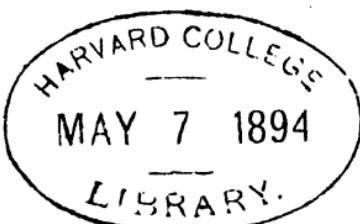
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PREFACE.

IT is in compliance with the wish of the loved and lamented author of these Sermons, that they have been submitted to me for my inspection; and that the oversight of them, as they passed through the press, was intrusted to my care. It is hardly necessary to say, that, with the exception of one or two trifling verbal alterations, they are printed just as they were preached. This statement is made at the desire of his family and friends; otherwise, greatly as I value the privilege of being associated with one so dear to myself, and so universally es-

teemed, I should have refrained from the obtrusion of my name. It may appear superfluous, and even presumptuous in me, to add any observations of my own on the character of these Sermons; but I cannot resist saying, that the perusal of them has confirmed the opinion formed from his preceding volume; namely, that, eminently useful, and singularly attractive, as are the series of his well-known Historical Lectures, and his practical Commentary on the Pentateuch, they are even surpassed by his Sermons. The value of these had been so long and so fully attested by the effect of his ministry, that it always seemed a matter of regret that a larger proportion of them was not presented to the public during his lifetime; though, perhaps, they may now come to many invested with a deeper

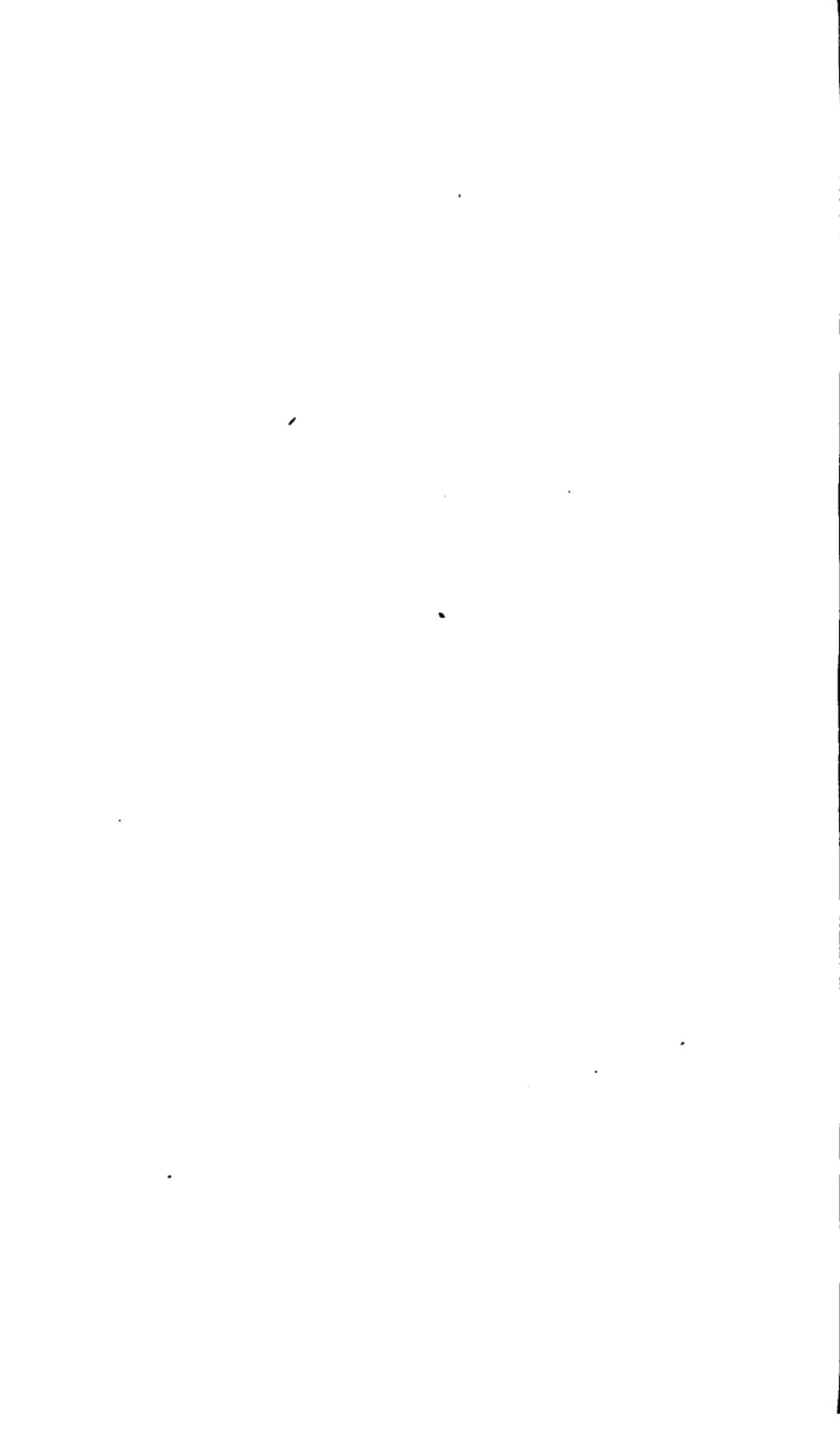
interest, as the echo of that loved voice, whose impressive sounds will long live in their remembrance. In all the sterling and more important qualities of addresses from the pulpit—in the full exhibition of the whole of Divine truth in its various bearings and proportions—in the intimate connexion maintained between Christian privilege and Christian practice—in the unfolding of the secret workings of the human heart, and in the deep searching of the conscience, they are unrivalled; while they are equally distinguished for the rich but simple eloquence, the brilliant but chastened imagination which pervades them; combined with a plain perspicuity of language that commends them to persons of all ranks and of all ages. I would only add, that the Sermons are a transcript of the man—

eminent for his clear and accurate discrimination, his sound and solid and comprehensive judgment—whose life exemplified the sanctifying influence of the truths which he enforced, while his death sealed the sufficiency of those promises which he delighted to proclaim. Though his bodily weakness was great to the utmost limit of endurance, his mind remained in full vigour to the last, and his faith and hope continued bright and unclouded even to the end. In the few last days he frequently repeated, in the full perception of their preciousness, those blessed words, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” And during the last day and night of suffering, this was his testimony, that the

dependance which he had realized in life, did not fail him in the hour of death : “ Much bodily suffering, but no doubt, and perfect peace ; and I know I shall enjoy it throughout eternity for the alone merits of my Saviour.”

JOHN BROWNE,
TRINITY CHURCH, CHELTENHAM.

Jan. 13, 1844.



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S E R M O N S.

SERMON I.

THE MUTABILITY OF MAN, THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

ZECHARIAH I. 5, 6.

“ YOUR FATHERS, WHERE ARE THEY ? AND THE PROPHETS, DO THEY LIVE FOR EVER ? BUT MY WORDS AND MY STATUTES, WHICH I COMMANDED MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS, DID THEY NOT TAKE HOLD OF YOUR FATHERS ? AND THEY RETURNED AND SAID, LIKE AS THE LORD OF HOSTS THOUGHT TO DO UNTO US, ACCORDING TO OUR WAYS, AND ACCORDING TO OUR DOINGS, SO HATH HE DEALT WITH US.”

THE mutability of man, and the immutability of God ! How awful a subject, how solemnly impressed upon us by every revolving year, yet how little inclined are

we to dwell upon it, how much indisposed to suffer the consideration of it to interfere with any of our plans of worldly enjoyment, or to quicken us, as it ought to do, in the immediate, the earnest, anxious pursuit of spiritual good. May our God, even Jehovah who spake these words in time past unto his people by the prophets, in this latter day speak them unto our hearts by the Spirit of his Son ; that if they have never yet, in the language of the text, "taken hold" of us, they may this day, so take hold of our attention, of our memory and of our hearts, as to sanctify to us this first Sabbath of the opening year, and to fix upon our souls the warning, the precepts, the promises and the threatenings of our God, that they may not merely influence us for a passing hour, but abide with us for ever.

We shall commence by stating briefly the original intention of the passage, as it occurs in the prophecy from which it is taken.

The Almighty had sent his prophet Zechariah, as we find by the beginning of the chapter, to call his people to repentance, with the promise that their repentance should be accepted. To urge them the more strongly to this, the Lord reminds them that he had “been sore displeased with their fathers,” and cautions them very expressly not to imitate their obduracy and sin, but to turn at the voice of the Lord. He then condescends to reason with them in the words of the text, upon the obvious wisdom and advantage of so doing, grounding this appeal upon the following affecting considerations; that their fathers, who in old time had been warned, as they were now, and had rejected the warning, had been cut off by the predicted judgments which they despised, and were, as the Psalmist expresses it, “clean gone for ever;” that the prophets who had carried these warnings, and urged them upon the attention of their fathers, could no longer benefit

them, for that they also were removed ; that the teachers and the taught, the disciples and the masters, in fact the whole generation, had been swept away ; thus reminding them, in a very convincing manner, of the mutability of man. The Almighty then proceeds to remind them as strikingly of the immutability of God. He says in effect, Did the Almighty change because your fathers would not hear and would not turn ? Did God alter his message because they refused to receive it ? Is not the warning which you hear at this hour, the identical warning which your fathers heard and scoffed at, and were destroyed ; and though generation after generation has passed away, has one jot or one tittle of God's Word ever passed away ? So far from it that I leave you to pronounce whether one syllable was changed, whether one syllable ever fell to the ground of all that the Lord had spoken. Did not the judgments which he long had threatened, at the last

overtake your fathers ? Were they not themselves compelled to declare that God never *thought* to bring one judgment upon them, and brought it not ? How convincing an argument, how striking a conclusion to the present message of the Almighty, thus to refer to the neglect and to the fulfilment of all that had preceded it.

My intention then, brethren, this morning, is to endeavour to impress upon you the importance and the necessity of your laying earnestly to heart all those messages from God, all the warnings, all the precepts, all the promises, which you have heard from this place during the last twelvemonth, by the same considerations, the immutability of God, and the mutability of his people, the unchangeableness of God and of his Word, and the transitoriness of you who hear, and of us who proclaim it.

First, from the immutability of God, and the unchangeableness of his Word.

If we who are the ministers of the Most High, were commissioned to bring you message after message from the great God of heaven and earth, and if these messages all were different the one from the other; if the warning of to-day were less solemn and less awakening than the warning of yesterday, or the promises of to-morrow more abundant than those of to-day, we can easily imagine you waiting in suspense, Sabbath after Sabbath, and year after year, watching for the most favourable opportunity, carefully preparing for the hour when you could make the most profitable terms with God, and turn to Him in penitence and faith. But, brethren, you well know that this is not the fact, that there is one message, and but one, which the ministers of God have for more than eighteen centuries been commissioned to sound in the ears of his people: that this message no man, no angel can ever alter; for did not the chief apostle to the Gentiles distinctly

say, “There be some that would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed!” The counsel and the word of the Most High, are therefore as immutable as His person; for does he not again expressly say by the prophet Ezekiel, “I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass.” “I am the Lord, I change not.” Can you then, brethren, justify yourselves in this, that knowing as you well know, and as we all know, that this is the truth; that the word which has once passed from the lips of the Almighty, can never alter; that the straight way will not be made broader, or the narrow gate wider, even though a world of sinners were struggling for admittance; can you justify yourselves in this, that after the way of salvation has been once fairly proposed to you, after the Lamb of

God, who alone taketh away the sins of the world, has been plainly presented to you, and the value of your soul, and the heinousness of sin, and the necessity of repentance, and the unutterable import of eternity, have been all distinctly set before you, you should yet be found slumbering at your post, deaf to warning, and callous to entreaties? Did you ever seriously think for one quarter of an hour, of the value of your soul? Did you ever reflect that after these little periods of time, year after year, have run away, that you possess what cannot die, that you carry within you that which, when unnumbered ages shall have run their course, will not be one day nearer to the termination of its existence than it is this morning? and that the fate of this immortal portion of you depends upon these few, brief, unthought of periods, another of which has since yesterday, joined its brethren beyond the flood? O how earnestly would we desire to plead with you,

if any are now present, careless, and indifferent, at this commencement of another year, upon your blindness and infatuation.

Look only at the words of the text, and observe from them, what has been the confession of the thoughtless sinner ; the man who lives and dies inattentive to the voice of warning, and of mercy, in every age that has passed over us ; and be assured that his experience must one day be your own. You may for a time escape the danger of which God has warned you; you may find pleasure, even though it be a transitory pleasure, in the follies and the sins of the world; still a day must come when God will seal the truth of every warning and every threatening you have heard in characters of fire upon your souls: a day must arrive, when the heartfelt confession will be wrung from you, which was there wrung from the impenitent Jews, “ Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according

to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." Yes, brethren, depend upon it, what God thinks he shall do that he will do, although earth and hell endeavour to arrest his progress. Has it not been always thus from the very foundation of the world? What would be the testimony of our first parents? God thought to punish their disobedience, and they hid themselves from God among the trees of the garden; did they escape? What would be the testimony of the antediluvian world? God thought to destroy them with a flood, which should overwhelm both man and beast, young and old; did they escape? No; though a whole world was in arms against God, their numbers formed no protection,—"like as he thought to do unto them, according to their ways, and according to their doings, so did he deal with them." So was it amidst the fires of Sodom; so was it at the destruction of Jerusalem; so shall it be on that day, when time gives

place to eternity. Not an individual ever passes out of this world in that enmity to God in which he was born, and in which he lived, who, if he were obliged to confess the truth, would not be compelled to speak as these have spoken. Many, no doubt, depart in stupid ignorance of all that shall come after, as the ox goeth to the slaughter; but this is only postponing the confession, not denying it. Of the great majority, we scruple not to say, that the feelings of their closing hours are of this nature,—‘What God has threatened he will perform; would that I might retrace my steps; would that I might live over again the wasted hours, the mispent days, the sinning years, that are now gone—and gone for ever.’ Then it is that the words of God, neglected in health, forgotten in prosperity, “take hold,” or as the marginal reading still more emphatically expresses it, “overtake” the sinner’s soul, and extort from him the humiliating confession.

But the expression of the text is peculiarly striking, "They returned and said." It is as if they were on the very brink of destruction, as if with one foot in the grave ; nay, more, as if the hand of God already pressed upon them in his wrath, when they turned back, and acknowledged, God has indeed been too strong for us, we have sown to the wind, and we must reap the whirlwind. Brethren, how fearful would be the testimony if all who have experienced, who are experiencing, this immutable truth, could return but for one hour, and bear their evidence to its fulfilment. What a scene of anguish and of misery would be laid bare before our eyes, if every impenitent sinner, every individual who commenced the last year in health and carelessness and defiance of God, and heard unmoved these threatenings and these warnings, and has since been called away in the same state of impenitency and sin, could now rise up before us and return to say,

"Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto me, according to my ways, and according to my doings, so hath he dealt," so is he dealing, so shall he deal with me throughout eternity!

Who could hear unmoved such an attestation to the unchangeableness of God? Who can bear to think that there is a living soul who could make it? Yet, can we question, can we for a moment doubt, if God and his Word be thus immutable, that if the prison-house of eternity were unbarred, and its guilty inhabitants driven forth, if the floor of this church were for a moment occupied by the "spirits now in prison," enveloped in their chains of fire, they would all—all as with one voice, one yell of self-condemnation and despair, proclaim the dreadful truth. "For God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" O, be assured, bre-

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thren, that as every promise to the believer is, "Yea, and amen, in Christ Jesus;" so every threatening to the impenitent sinner's soul is fixed as immovably as the foundations of the throne of God.

But we must pass from these strong motives offered you for immediate repentance, by this view of the immutability of God and of his Word, to the no less striking, no less affecting motive we may derive from the mutability of you who hear, and of us who present them.

"Your fathers, where are they?"

What a touching inquiry, when made by God himself, as in the text, to his poor perishing wandering people. If you examine the preceding verses, you will see that it was spoken more in sorrow than in anger. It was not the language of scorn, or of insult, for he who asked the question, has just before said, "Be ye not as your fathers."

“ Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.” There were love and mercy, therefore, still in store for them ; but nevertheless, for all this, “ God would be inquired of by them.” And it was therefore to excite this feeling in their breast, by awakening again the sorrows which were slumbering there, that the Almighty thus referred to those who were gone.

Surely he who made the human heart, well knew how best to touch the springs by which its sympathies are opened, when he asked the affecting question, “ Your fathers, *where are they?*” Has not the grave even now closed over them ? Are they so early called away, and have you no desire, when God shall take you hence, to follow them ? If the Word of God can awaken no spiritual feeling within your breast, can it also touch no natural chord that lies responsive there ? Have you never so loved one earthly being whom God has taken to himself before

you, that you would rejoice in the thought of seeing that object of your affection at God's right hand ? Here, then, is a motive, and comparatively low and selfish though it be, we would leave untried no motive which may win you to your own eternal happiness, which may plant you as a jewel in your Redeemer's crown. If there be those to whom you would desire to be re-united, in the realms of bliss, O delay not, trifle not, with this great salvation. "The time past of your life may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles ;" now, even to-day, "put off the works of darkness, and put upon you the armour of light ;" come, all sinful though you be; come, but in penitence and faith, to the Saviour of your soul; he invites you, he urges you, he intreats you, by every hope of present pardon and of future blessedness, to come unto him, that your soul may live.

But the mutability of man is impressed upon you by another example, in

the words of the text, “The prophets, do they live for ever ?” Do not they who bear my messages to you pass away like a shadow that departeth ? And ought not this reflection to induce you to improve the opportunity while it lasts : to hear them while they are permitted to speak unto you ? There are few of us, perhaps, who have not at this moment within our veins the seeds of those diseases which in God’s good time (always the best time), will finish our work, and carry us before his judgment-seat, who shall “try every man’s work, of what sort it is.” This cannot but remind us that our opportunities of warning, inviting, urging you, may be but few; that another opening year may find our labours finished, our lips for ever closed. As one, then, who is not ignorant that he may shortly put off this tabernacle, we would always desire to speak as dying unto dying men, and urge you, if you have never yet “taken hold of the word of life,” if you have

never yet realized its tremendous truths, that you would this day cease from trifling with God and with your souls ; for it *is* trifling, trifling of the most alarming kind, year after year to listen to the fullest revelations of the Gospel of peace, and year after year to live as if convinced of their utter fallacy. We urge you, then, beloved brethren, by the certainty that the time is short, and that the fashion of this world passeth away ; by the memory of those who have gone before, and to whom you wish to be re-united ; by the probability that our opportunities of setting these things home upon your conscience may be but few ; by the blessedness of heaven ; by the terrors of hell—that you fly to the Great Propitiation, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and give yourselves up to him from this day even for ever.

Referring once more, for the last time, to the words of the text, suppose for a moment that they to whom they were

addressed had been compelled to answer those solemn queries, how fearful would have been the reply! "Your fathers, where are they?" Gone, gone for ever, to give an account of their stubbornness, their disobedience, their ingratitude, and their sins, and to suffer the due reward of their deeds. "The prophets," where are they? Gone also; gone to stand face to face, to confront our fathers at the judgment-seat of God; gone to stand face to face with them at that bar, and to pronounce, "We did not shun to declare unto you the whole counsel of God;" we warned you, we threatened you, we invited you, whether you would hear, or whether you would forbear; we altered not the message of our God; and all of which we have forewarned you has this day come to pass. And think you, brethren, that it will be a less fearful thing when Christian ministers and Christian congregations shall meet before that dread tri-

bunal, than thus for Jewish hearers and Jewish prophets? How, then, are we, as ministers, prepared for that approaching scene? Can we, your ministers, declare that we have left no effort untried, no means neglected, no entreaties unemployed, which might have won you from your worldliness and forgetfulness of God, and awakened you from your sleep of death? Alas! God knows that we cannot; that we have not only, as the apostle declared of his own ministry, been "with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling," but in coldness and in inefficiency, and in much unfaithfulness; but thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift; thanks be to God that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from *all* sin, ministerial as well as personal; for looking back upon the cross, we do find peace and comfort there, or fearfully should we dread that coming hour. And you, brethren, how are you prepared to

meet us, “your servants for Christ’s sake,” in the presence and before the throne of our Master? Remember, “if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” Has our Gospel, then, been unto you “the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death?” Recollect that the same sun which softens the wax hardens the clay. Has the preaching of the Gospel, with all its precious promises, its unbounded offers, its overwhelming great and glorious anticipations, softened or hardened you? And shall we on that day rejoice in the presence of our Lord over your complete and full salvation, hailing your entrance into everlasting blessedness; or shall we weep, “if souls can weep in bliss,” that those who have once united with us in the prayers and praises of these earthly temples, shall unite with us again no more for ever? May these inquiries be fixed upon your consciences; may they return to you in the silence of

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your chambers, in hours of thoughtfulness, and hours of sleeplessness ; and may they never leave you until they have led you from reflection to prayer, and from prayer to Christ, and from Christ to God, and from God to heaven !

SERMON II.

THE CHRISTIAN'S REFUGE.

ISAIAH XXXII. 2.

"A MAN SHALL BE AS AN HIDING PLACE FROM THE WIND,
AND A COVERT FROM THE TEMPEST; AS RIVERS OF
WATER IN A DRY PLACE, AS THE SHADOW OF A
GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND."

THIS is a very remarkable prophecy and promise, and at first sight most strikingly at variance with almost every other declaration of the Word of God. For let us dwell for a moment upon some of the statements of that inspired volume. Hear the declaration of this same prophet Isaiah in his second chapter, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Listen again to the words of David, "Trust

in the Lord at all times, ye people." Hear also the words of Jeremiah, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." These and many other testimonies might be adduced, to prove that the whole tenour of Divine writ runs counter to the passage of the text, "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind." A poor, weak, helpless mortal, unable to protect himself from the wind and tempest, and shall he be our refuge? Shall God's own word command us to leave the living fountain, and betake ourselves, in our necessities, to the broken cisterns of earth? Strange inconsistency, strange contradiction to every other portion of God's Word! But, perhaps, there is a meaning in the passage which does not appear upon the surface; perhaps there is some peculiarity in the man there mentioned, different from all the other children of men that ever lived; and so different, so widely different, that while they are all the creatures of a day,

of whom the unerring Word of God has said, “Put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them ;” of this Man it shall be declared that, “At his name every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ;” that “all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth,” that “he upholdeth all things by the word of his power,” and that “whoso trusteth in him shall never be confounded.”

Blessed be God, his own Word assures us that it is so ; he who has declared in the text that, “a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind,” has declared by the mouth of the prophet Zechariah, who that man is, when he says, “Awake, O sword, against the *man* that is *my fellow*, saith the Lord of hosts.” My equal, not merely near to God, but one who should “think it no robbery to be

equal with God," even "the Man Christ Jesus;" equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, though inferior to the Father as touching his manhood; who, although born of a woman, and made after the *likeness* of sinful flesh, is yet declared to have been throughout all eternity in the bosom of the Father, "*God*, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds;" and who is thus spoken of by the Spirit of God himself, when predicting the event of this day, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." It is then of this Man, David's son, according to the flesh, but David's Lord, by an eternal generation; "perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting," that we are to speak, taking the words of the text as a remarkable and beautiful

metaphor of what he is able and willing to be and to do for his people.

The Lord Jesus Christ, then, reveals himself in the words before us under two striking similitudes; the first of which regards his people's safety, and the second their consolations.

I. As regards their safety.

"A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." If you desire to understand the full force of the image, picture to yourself one of those scenes which eastern travellers paint, when they describe the passage of a caravan across some dreary and uninhabited desert, where, throughout the long day's journey, there is no house, no rock, no tree, to offer a moment's shade or a moment's shelter. In the midst of such a scene the wind suddenly rises, and the lightning glares around, and in the distance are beheld gigantic columns of sand, raised and kept together in such vast masses by the whirlwind as to ex-

clude even the rays of the sun from passing through them, and as these fearful phenomena approach, everything is overwhelmed before them; the poor bewildered travellers behold in them at once their destruction and their grave. In vain do they attempt to fly; their gigantic enemies are coming upon the wings of the wind, and nothing mortal can outstrip them; in vain do they attempt to face them; for who can wage equal war against the elements? all hope is at an end, all efforts vain; the wind slackens not, the tempest does not cease, and before the shortest prayer is finished, that multitude that was but now replete with life and animation, is hushed in silence; every mouth is stopped, every heart has ceased to beat; the simoon of the desert has passed over them, and the place they occupied is scarcely to be distinguished from the surrounding plain.

Now imagine in such a scene, and at

such a season, and this is no flight of imagination, but a simple though appalling fact, the feelings with which these alarmed and flying travellers would greet a "hiding-place," and "a covert." Imagine that while they were looking with an apprehension which we can scarcely conceive at those advancing pillars of sand in which they were so shortly to be entombed, they should on a sudden behold a rock of adamant spring up before them, a barrier which neither sand, nor wind, nor tempest, could overleap. What would be their feelings of joy, their thoughts of gratitude, their language of praise! Oh! who can imagine the heartfelt cry of thanksgiving to God which would arise from that vast multitude at so complete, so merciful, so unhoped-for a deliverance. Then, brethren, such are the feelings with which we would encourage you to "behold the Man" of whom we this day speak. Our sins had raised a tempest of the wrath of God, against which the whole created

host of heaven would in vain have attempted to erect a barrier. Therefore said the Lord, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." "I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation." He has on this day, taking upon himself our nature, placed himself between us and his Father's wrath; he stood alone as that wall of adamant, between us and the coming tempest. All that would have driven us from the presence of God for ever, or have overwhelmed our souls with remediless destruction, fell upon Him, and upon Him alone, and by his life of suffering and humiliation and obedience, and by his death of agony, and by his resurrection of power, we were secured. The tempest, which would have scattered us as chaff before the whirlwind, has lost its power; and now if we have fled into the "hiding-place," if we are seated beneath "his shadow," passes harmlessly above our head, or is

heard by us, as many of you this evening, when seated comfortably in your warm and peaceful dwellings, surrounded by the quiet circle of your own happy families, will listen to the winds or rain of winter, blessing God that you enjoy a refuge and a home.

Such are the sentiments which the present season ought more especially to awaken in our bosoms.

Yes, brethren, such are the feelings which you ought to possess this day,* such are the feelings which you will possess, if you have been led by the Spirit of God to him, who has thus been made of God, "a hiding-place," and a "covert"—feelings of security and joy and peace and safety. But then, you, and you alone, can ascertain whether these feelings are your own. I need not tell you that an unapplied Saviour, is no Saviour to your souls. I need not tell you that the hiding-place, is a hiding-place to him who is

* Preached on Christmas Day.

within it, not to him who stands without ; that the covert, is no covert to him who remains uncovered ; that a Christian baptism and a Christian sanctuary, and a Christian ministry, yea, and even a Christ himself, are necessarily no safeguard to you. If you stand without, justice must have its course ; the law which you have broken must be avenged ; the Saviour whom you have rejected must be glorified, if not by you, in your salvation, then upon you, in your punishment. If the safety, which every redeemed and ransomed child of God may possess, is not yours, it is only because you accept it not ; if the Spirit is not yours, it is only because you seek him not ; if the Lord Jesus Christ is not yours, it is only because you love him not. O fearful state for any individual possessing within him a never-dying soul, and looking forward to a never-ending existence ; but most fearful to you, if such there be, who, although the baptized members of the outward

Church of Christ, have never sought, are not now seeking, a real interest in his blood, a conformity to his will, a place in his kingdom.

II. But let us proceed from the consideration of the similitude which regards his people's safety, to that which regards his people's comfort.

A man shall be as "rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." While the "rock," in climates and countries, such as we have alluded to, shadows forth the strength and protection which the Lord Jesus Christ offers to his people, "rivers of water," beneath a burning sun, and on a burning soil, equally shadow forth comfort and consolation.

In passing through the world, however the people of the world, surrounded by its joys, courted by its friends, backed by its good opinions, may be enabled to delight in it, to the children of God it is oftentimes, "a dry and barren place."

There are many causes, externally and internally, to make it so. There are times when trials and afflictions and anxieties press closely upon us; when those we love are laid upon beds of sickness, or followed to an early grave; when our prospects are darkened by disappointments, or marred by adversity; when the world, at all times destitute of the real consolations of the Christian, becomes more barren, and more desolate than the wide and waste-howling wilderness itself. At times like these, whither can the child of God betake himself? You look not for earthly succour; it is in vain to look, for all those whom you love are perhaps plunged in the same calamity, borne down by the same trial as yourself. How blessed, then, to feel that there is one who visited this world of ours, and lived as you are now living; who carried about with him a body of infirmity and death; who grieved for the same losses, and wept over the same afflictions from

which you are weeping; and is presented to you in the Word of God as man, that you may feel assured of his sympathy, while he is also presented to you as God, that you may feel certain of his power. Does your soul, then, in these dry places, thirst for consolation and succour? That Man is proclaimed in the text to be as "rivers of water in a dry place;" that Man, in the days of his flesh, "stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," and "the water that I shall give him, shall be in him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Here then is your consolation; as your safety is to be found in Christ, so also is your comfort. He shall be to you not only a covert from God's wrath, but a river; nay more, *rivers*, to show the abundance of his consolations, "rivers of water," when you are fainting under the trials, or anxieties, or distresses of the world. Now, brethren, do you know

anything of the blessedness of this source of consolation? It is not enough that the river is running at your feet, but you must know that it is there, you must drink of its waters, or they will not assuage your thirst. Recollect a beautiful illustration of this in the history of Hagar, when driven from the tent of Abraham. You will remember that when she was cast out into the wilderness with her child, and had looked in vain for a supply of water; when all that was in the bottle was spent, when the streamlets were dry, and the clouds promised no rain, she sat down in utter hopelessness and helplessness, having cast the child under one of the shrubs that she might not see it die. And we are told, that as she lift up her voice and wept, the Angel of the Lord called to her out of heaven, and said, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not: and God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water," sufficient, amply sufficient, for

the need both of the mother and the child, during their whole sojourn in the wilderness. How beautiful an instance of the mercy and the power of God! How apt a type of the Christian's situation here below. You may at this moment be sitting by "the river of water," of which I am speaking, and yet be as ignorant—as practically ignorant of its existence, as Hagar was; as little benefited, and as little blessed, as if its healing waters were still a sealed fountain, which had never been opened, or a river locked in everlasting ice, and whose streams never poured forth rich abundance at your feet. What aileth thee, that thou seest it not? Pray to Him who alone can open your eyes. Pray to God for his dear Son's sake, to show you the well which stands beside you, whose living waters are for ever full, for ever flowing, and of which, if any man drink, he shall never thirst. Beseech him to reveal to you the Son of his love, as a full and sufficient

Saviour ; one who will not only bear all your sins, but all your sorrows, and not only be your strength and your salvation, but your joy, your peace, your strong consolation.

Lastly, are there none among you, even of the children of God, who find this world to be a “weary land,” on account of the spiritual disquietudes of your pilgrimage, not merely those you behold around you, but those which you continually experience within you ; none, who, although reconciled, as we hope, to the God of your salvation, still find constant opposition, and toil, and conflict, from the troubles of the journey, and like the Israelites of old, are often “much discouraged because of the way?” Yes, doubtless, there are some of you who can say with the Psalmist, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living.” Doubtless, there are many who even with this source of consolation, are still con-

tinually distressed by the little spirituality of heart and life to which you have attained. Your daily feeling is that you are still so worldly, so cold, so indifferent to the God and Saviour of your soul, that amid the upbraiding of your own conscience, and the unceasing attacks of your spiritual enemies, this is to you, indeed, a "weary world," and a toilsome journey, and oftentimes do you wish its labours over, and yourself at home. Yet, weary as is the way, beloved brethren, every mile of it must be trodden, and your anxiety must be rather to quit you like men, and be strong; to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," than to be in haste for the rest which remaineth for you at that journey's end.

Do you ask how you shall be enabled to achieve this? Let the words of the text point out your remedy. There is not only a hiding-place and a covert, but a rock, and a great rock, in this

weary land. You have already found it a hiding-place, but perhaps you have contented yourselves with coming just *within the range of its shadow*; you have been satisfied with escaping from the burning beams of God's wrath, and the fiery darts of the wicked one; but you are still only within the extremest limit of this overshadowing rock. Be persuaded, then, no longer to rest and settle there; pray and strive and labour to advance. You may be partially sheltered where you are, you may even be safe where you are; but as you draw further and further within the Rock of your salvation, you will find an increase of its sheltering peace and comfort, which you now but little know. There are recesses in that Rock into which you are specially invited; and the closer you draw, the more boldly you advance, the more welcome, the more happy, the more blessed shall you be. There are veins of ore in that Rock sufficient to enrich ten

thousand worlds, for the Word of the living God has called them “the unsearchable riches of Christ;” but they will not enrich you if you keep at a distance from them; you must work the mine, you must dig the ore, you must, by prayer and faith, appropriate it, make it your own, use it, enjoy it, live by it and upon it, or you derive not half the comforts and consolations which are treasured up for you in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Seek these more constantly, more prayerfully, more earnestly; they will amply repay the search; you shall find in them wealth which neither Satan nor conscience can disturb, joy which shall gladden every stage of the journey, and yet, throughout it all, shall be only in the bud, but shall break forth into an everlasting fruit-bearing at the journey's end.

Come then, this day, and commemorate the blessings of which we have now

spoken; draw near with thankful and rejoicing hearts to the table of Him who loved you and gave himself for you. Do not reject his invitation; remember it was purchased by the life's blood of him who offers it. Do not refuse to meet Him here, whom you hope to meet and live with in heaven. Do not turn your back upon a blessing, which love, boundless as eternity itself, has purchased for you; but draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort, and, like the beloved apostle, sit down this day under the shadow of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever. And may God grant that we all, who are partakers of the symbols here, may together partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb in the kingdom of our Father!

SERMON III.

CHRIST THE FULNESS OF THE BELIEVER.

EPHESIANS I. 22, 23. (PART.)

"THE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH, WHICH
IS HIS BODY, THE FULNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH
ALL IN ALL."

THE great and blessed truth revealed to us in the text, is not confined to this single passage of the Divine word, it is to be found propounded again and again; in the Epistle from which the text is taken; in the First Epistle to the Corinthians; and in the Epistle to the Colossians—sufficient evidence of its great and remarkable prominence in the teaching of the Spirit, and of its deep importance to the

people of God. But then, brethren, it is to the people of God alone that it speaks. It contains nothing for the world; the nominal Christian, the mere outward member of our truly scriptural Church, the man attached to it by birth, or by accident, will find nothing in this high subject to gratify his curiosity, or to delight his taste, or even, I fear, to enlarge his knowledge; except it is by showing him that there are great and important truths in the religion he professes, of which he is at present utterly ignorant; for the blessed declarations before us will be to him a sealed treasure, while to the spiritually enlightened mind they are as plain, and as influential, as any to be found in the revelation of God.

The truth in the text is conveyed by a very simple metaphor, which represents the Church of God, *i.e.*, not merely our own national Church, which forms, however, we trust, one of its most beauteous members, but the whole family of be-

lievers throughout all time; those now in heaven, and those now on earth, and those who shall follow us, and fill up our places in the battle when we are enjoying the repose of the victory. It represents, I say, the whole Church of God, so composed, under the similitude of one human body, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only spiritual Head. It then declares that this body, the Church, forms the fulness, or the glory of Christ, who "filleth all in all."

My intention is, with God's help, to consider these great truths as developed in the text, under two distinct heads.

I. The nature of Christ's relationship to the Church, and his employment.

II. The nature of the Church's relationship to Christ, and her exceeding great and precious privileges.

I. Then, Christ is the "Head over all things to the Church," and "filleth all in all."

When the apostle declares that Christ

is the Head of the Church, doubtless his first and most obvious intention is to mark his pre-eminence, to demonstrate, as he has elsewhere declared, that “God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. ii. 9—11.) But this is far from being all that is involved in the relationship. And this the same apostle distinctly illustrates when speaking of Christ as the Head, in the Epistle to the Colossians, he immediately adds, “From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”

It is clear, then, from this passage, “having nourishment ministered,” that it refers to Christ as our Head, not only

in point of pre-eminence, but in point of influence. For as in the human body all the nerves spring from the brain, and yet communicate life and feeling to every part of the body, down even to the smallest and remotest member, so all spiritual life, and all spiritual feeling in the Church of God, take their rise from one great and glorified Head; and spread downward from that source of influence into the heart of every individual member.

Observe, not only the doctrinal truth, but the practical lesson, which immediately flows from this important fact. Until you are spiritually united by a true and living faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, you must inevitably be as destitute of spiritual life and feeling, as a human body, from which the head has been separated, would be destitute of all sense and of all motion. While, on the other hand, when by a living and obeying faith, for none other is a living faith, you are

united to our adorable Redeemer; when you have been led to choose him for your portion, to accept him in all his offices for your full and sufficient Saviour, casting your soul unreservedly upon the promises of God in Christ Jesus; you become spiritually members of his body, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. Your "life is hid with Christ in God." All that you need of strength, of light, of grace, of guidance, are treasured up for you in him, and are to be daily drawn out by you from him, according to your daily wants, your daily sorrows, and your daily temptations, and trials.

We have said that this is the practical lesson to be deduced from the scriptural relationship of the Redeemer to the Church which he has purchased with his own blood. Now let us mark the great encouragement to this lesson which may be drawn from the employment of the Redeemer, adverted to in the text. He "filleth all in all."

The true and sincere followers of God among you, well know your own emptiness. You are making larger discoveries of it every day and every hour. When you would do good, evil is present with you. When you should enter into good resolutions, you are deficient in the will to do so, and when you have entered into them, you are destitute of the power of accomplishing them; and all this is matter of personal and individual experience, just as certainly as of the Divine declaration, "Without me, ye can do nothing."

Under this feeling, then, of utter incapacity, look upward to your great and glorified Head, and as you have already heard the nature of his relationship to his Church, hear also for your encouragement and consolation, the nature of his employment, that "he filleth all in all."

What a delightful view does this present to the Christian of the Christian's Lord ! He is for ever employed in filling up

all graces, all wants, all imperfections, in all his members, by the prevailing power of his intercession, by the continual outpourings of his Spirit, by the constant impartings of himself. To make this still more plain; you possess an understanding, a will, an imagination, a memory, and a heart; all these, then, the Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken, from the character in which the text portrays him, to fill even to overflowing; your understanding with spiritual thoughts, your will with heavenly desires, your memory with holy recollections, your imagination with glorious anticipations, your heart with himself.

It is true, that to effect this great work in every individual member of his blessed body, much time, much teaching, and, in many instances, much affliction, much trial, will be needed, but it is not the less true that it shall be done.

It may be that some whom I am now addressing, are thinking, while they hear

these great and important truths ; Would that I might indeed hope that this could be verified in my own case ! But I have been long seeking the truth, long desiring to know more and more of God, and of my duty ; and yet I feel as if with me the great work were for ever to be recommenced ; there is scarcely any perceptible advance ; there is almost as little of spiritual life now within my heart as there ever was, and yet, I greatly fear, as much as there ever will be.

Upon this point, Christian brethren, you are not always the most unprejudiced judges ; while the many are apt to determine far too favourably in their own cause, there will always be a few of the real children of God, who will write bitter things against themselves, which the Lord hath not written, and look gloomily and despondingly upon their own case, while the Spirit of God is speaking peace and offering strong consolation.

Now as Christian ministers, there are few duties more delightful than to offer the encouragements with which our Master has intrusted us for the comfort of such souls as these ; to send them, by God's help, forward on their Christian course contented and rejoicing. We would say then to you, and such as you,— and we would not be deterred from saying it, by the knowledge of that fatal chemistry by which the devil can distil the strongest poison from the sweetest flowers that grow in the garden of God,— we would say to you, the Saviour whom you serve, and who has reconciled you to your Heavenly Father, is engaged to “fill all in all ;” to fill up all wants in all his members, to support every broken reed, to kindle into a flame every smoking flax ; therefore you, although the feeblest, have no cause to despond ; or you, although the youngest, the weakest, the most empty, have no cause to despair. As long as there is on your part, humble

and holy walking, sincere and faithful seeking, earnest and conscientious acting according to the light and grace which God has given you, so long will there be, on his part, a fulfilment of this most blessed of his offices, the strengthening and refreshing of your souls, the guiding and the guarding of your steps, the filling up of your manifold deficiencies.

How encouraging is the thought, how blessed the view which this consideration presents us with. "To you who believe," says an apostle, "Christ is precious;" but how precious even an apostle could not say. You love him now, because he calls you, justifies you, sanctifies you. You will love him more as time wears on, and as you advance in your Christian life and character; for as a Saviour you will know him more; and to know him is to love him. You will love him still better at the last great day, when time shall be no longer, because you will hear from his own lips the sen-

tence which shall pronounce you blessed. But when all these are over, when there are no more sins to pardon, no more pollutions to cleanse, no more sentences to pass, what will there be for ever and for ever to draw forth your feelings, your gratitude, your love ? There will still be this blessed relationship in which we are permitted to view him even here, “ Head over all things to his Church.” The same relationship of which you have now begun to taste the blessedness and the joy, but then grown up, matured, and perfected; leaving him amidst the fulness of your perfections, nothing to fill up in you ; and leaving you amidst the fulness of your fruition, nothing to desire from him. For he who is now employed in filling up all in all, shall then have filled up all in all. The work will be for ever over, but the relationship will for ever remain. Oh, most perfect and blessed accomplishment of our Lord’s dying petition, “ That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in

me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

We proceed, Secondly, To consider the relationship in which the Church stands to Christ, and her exceeding great and precious privileges.

The Church is, as we have seen, described in the text, in the very remarkable character of Christ's body and of Christ's fulness; "the fulness of him who filleth all in all."

How little does the world, how little does even the Church of God, think of its own privileges and honour! After all the great and glorious things spoken of the Saviour, that this little flock, this poor despised company, composed of many of the weakest men, and the feeblest women, and the most helpless children; and treated as the offscouring of all things, the very scorn and ridicule of a self-sufficient and ignorant world; should be declared by the immutable Word of God to be the Saviour's body and the

Saviour's fulness, his honour, and his glory, and his bride! So completely his purchased possession, the prize for which he was content to pour forth his life's blood like water from the cross, that if it were possible that the gates of hell could prevail against her, so that she could perish, he would be robbed of his reward. If David could say of the mere type of the spiritual Church, "Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God," what ought the Christian to feel when considering the language in which that Church is itself described? But this we conceive to be one of the great faults of Christians at the present day; they look at the Word of God, and at the promises of God, as applying to themselves as individuals, and do not endeavour to take delight in them as applicable to the Church as a body, and to themselves as members of that body. What a powerful incentive to Christian concord and Christian unity is thus destroyed!

What an additional bond of love would it be, how much more would exist of that Christian sympathy which rejoices with those who rejoice, and which weeps with those who weep, and which delights in bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ, if we more prayerfully and more constantly cultivated the habit of looking upon ourselves and all our fellow-worshippers as members of one redeemed family, one mystical body, whose head is Christ!

But even this important lesson is not all that we might derive from keeping the scriptural view of the subject continually in our sight. There are two peculiarly encouraging deductions which may be drawn from it for the encouragement of that class which I have already addressed; you who fear, that notwithstanding every effort of watchfulness and prayer, you shall never arrive, in Christian graces, at the stature of the fulness of Christ; and you, who have equal doubts

and fears, lest you should never be admitted into the presence of Christ.

You, then, who fear that you shall never attain to the full development of the Christian character—if the view which we have already taken of the employment of the Redeemer, in filling up the measure of his people, be not sufficient to assure you—consider this, that the fulness of Christ, his very glory itself, is actually made to consist of every member grown up to that fulness of stature which God has appointed him.

In passing through the world, we are constantly led to observe the great disparity, not only between the natural endowments and the adventitious advantages, but between the spiritual gifts and graces of those, who we cannot doubt are equally sincere, and equally among the true people of God: some, for instance, possessing high, very high degrees of knowledge, which are not vouchsafed to others; and we are sometimes tempted

to wonder how it is possible that Christians, differing so widely in their spiritual stature now, shall all be equally happy, and all be united in the same heaven hereafter. The view, then, which we derive from this portion of our text clears up the mystery. If the Church be indeed the body of Christ, all these differences and disparities of growth have evidently been foreseen and provided for; and on the last great day, when the body shall have grown up to its perfection, and all the members of that body shall be gathered to their glorified Head, we shall no longer wonder at these disproportions. Every, even the weakest and smallest of the company of true believers, will find his place in that perfect body, though each will differ from the other; and it will then be seen that each has attained just those proportions which were necessary to the perfect symmetry of the body of Christ, and to that place in the body which each was appointed to fill. But

let not these considerations, which are intended to encourage the desponding, be perverted to the contentment of the indolent, or the self-satisfied Christian. It is only when you have used, and are using, all “diligence to make your calling and election sure,” that you can take the slightest encouragement from declarations such as these. The very fact that you are ceasing to labour, to strive, or to pray, would be among the most convincing proofs that you have neither part nor lot in the matter; for that grace of God which is never withheld from the faithful prayer of the weakest believer, will never be extended to the self-satisfied, the careless, or the slothful professor.

Lastly, To show that if you are living a life of holy and devoted obedience to God, springing from a simple reliance upon all that Christ has done, and is now doing, for your salvation, your fears of not being finally admitted into his presence are utterly vain.

If the Church be the body of Christ, then must every one of its true members, whether great or small, be present on that day, when the Lord Jesus Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;" on that day, when "he shall present it to himself, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish." If in the natural body, the head cannot say even to the feet, I have no need of you; then neither in the spiritual body will Christ say to the weakest of his children, I have no need of thee. Every soul that is here converted to himself, every individual engaged by a life of holiness, in living to him, is viewed by him as one stone more placed in the spiritual temple, as one member more added to his body. And until all the members be added, and unless all the members be preserved, the glory of Christ would be imperfect, his body incomplete. If, then, you are

the very lowest and most inconsiderable of all the spiritual members of the Church of Christ on earth, the salvation of your single soul is as necessary to the perfect glorification of the Saviour, as the salvation of the most advanced apostle or prophet who ever lived ; yea, even as the redemption of a world. For, if one infant child of God were wanting, Jesus Christ could not be full, since he has declared that the Church is his fulness, and as a true and living member of that Church, even that child must help to make up that fulness. The glory of heaven would not content the Saviour if the humblest member of his body were not there. Therefore, even during the days of his flesh, we find him praying, “ Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.” And again, “ This is the Father’s will, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again

at the last day." And again, "It is not the will of your heavenly Father, that one of these little ones should perish." As soon would a mortal man submit willingly to be torn limb from limb, as that the Lord Jesus Christ would consent to lose one inmate of his blessed family, one member of his body, one jewel of his crown.

May the Spirit of our God bestow abundantly upon all of us the comfort of these soul-encouraging views, of which the Word of our God so frequently and so largely predicates. That he may do so, beloved Christian brethren, accustom yourselves often to dwell prayerfully and gratefully upon those blessed truths of which we have now spoken: and let the eye of faith be daily looking forward to that glorious day when they shall all be realized: when all the component parts of that colossal body of which Christ is the head, shall be gathered from the four

winds, and from one end of heaven to the other, and shall all meet together once and for ever, in his blessed and glorious presence. When, at the voice of the archangel, which is the trump of God, all those who have departed this life in his faith and fear—many whom we have known, and some whom we have dearly and tenderly loved, all true believers of every age and country and kindred and tongue, the profoundest sages of Christian antiquity, the helpless and ignorant babe who died yesterday—shall alike constitute the parts of but one beautiful and perfect body; as the stones of one vast temple, which, however different in their dimensions, each fills the niche appropriated to itself, and each, whether small or great, adds in equal proportion to the beauty and the grandeur of the whole: on that great and coming day, may it be found that of all who now worship with us in the earthly temples of our God none may

be absent, none may be excluded from that spiritual edifice, which has been more than 5,000 years in building, and which, when completed, shall endure through all the ages of eternity !

SERMON IV.

THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN.

Acts xxvi. 28.

"ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST ME TO BE A CHRISTIAN."

IN speaking to you upon these words, it is not my intention to refer at all to the narrative in which they occur, but to consider them simply as the declaration of a worldly man, that he was almost persuaded to be a Christian, and to deduce from it this important fact, that what was the case with Agrippa, must be the case with others, may be the case with us. It is therefore deeply important, as St. Paul says, "to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith," lest, after

years of profession, of church-going, of sermons, and of sacraments, any of us may be found to have come short of it, any of us may be discovered, at the last great day of account, when ministers and people shall again be assembled, to have been only almost, while we believed ourselves to have been altogether Christians.

The great difficulties in the subject before us are these ; on the one hand, to speak with sufficient plainness to penetrate the disguises and the deceits of the proverbially deceitful natural heart ; and on the other, to avoid distressing the tender consciences of those real children of God, who are the most likely to take to themselves the very warnings and cautions which least of all apply to them.

May the Holy Spirit of God be present with us, helping us to unveil the mere professor of religion, and to lay open his heart to his own sight and his own knowledge ; and at the same time to prevent those who are really in earnest in this

great and blessed work from being cast down by the sight of its difficulties, or dismayed by the awful thought, that many who appear to have set their foot on the threshold of heaven, shall never enter within its everlasting gates.

I shall begin by endeavouring to distinguish the class whom I would address as almost Christians. First, it is evident that I do not refer to those who are living in a course of habitual and notorious sin; they are so far from being almost Christians, that despite their baptism and their name, they are much nearer altogether Heathen, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, without hope and without God."

It is evident, again, I do not speak of those who, without any gross delinquencies, are living lives of careless thoughtlessness, to whom religion is at best but a Sunday occupation, and who, if they have never had a doubt upon the subject, have never had either a scrip-

tural hope, or a holy fear. These clearly cannot be even almost such persons as Agrippa spake of being, and as St. Paul, through Divine grace, really *was*.

When, therefore, I speak of you who are almost persuaded to be Christians, I speak of you who have advanced as far beyond the two classes to whom I have already alluded, as you have fallen short of that into which I trust the free and sovereign grace of God will one day bring you. It is to you I speak, and that you may be led to know, each for himself, whether you belong to the class to which I refer, I shall endeavour to point out to you, with all plainness and sincerity, those delicate and yet important shades of distinction which exist between the almost Christian and the wholly and entirely Christian; earnestly beseeching you not to apply the description to your neighbours, but to yourself, to ask upon each point that passes in review before you, “Lord, is it I?”

- The almost Christian, then, is one who has advanced to a certain length upon all the great and leading characteristics which distinguish the real people of God from the people of the world. These characteristics are—

- I. The enlightening of the understanding and the conscience.
- II. The converting of the will and the affections.
- III. The reforming of the life and conversation.

First, then, the almost Christian is one who has advanced very far in the enlightening of the understanding and the conscience. With regard to the understanding, it is difficult to say how far we may not advance upon this great characteristic of the children of God, and yet have no portion with them of his Spirit. From frequently hearing the truths of the Gospel plainly stated, you may learn to understand them, to talk of them, to enter into all the shades of doctrine, to know

to the most minute article of a creed, all that is orthodox, and all that is heterodox; you may be enabled to unfold the mysteries of redemption to others, and to dwell upon the beauties of its wondrous scheme, and the excellences of its salvation, till those who hear you are astonished at the clearness of your views, and the depth of your Christian experience. You may go further than this; you may be perfectly convinced of the truth of all that you advance; of the certainty that none can be saved but those who cordially and entirely embrace the doctrines of eternal life which you so well understand; and yet with all this illumination of the understanding, you may never actually embrace these truths yourself.

As with the understanding, so with the conscience; your conscience may enjoy perfect peace, the last best gift of God's good Spirit, when built upon a right foundation, even the simple reliance

upon the blood of Christ; but you may enjoy a counterfeit of this peace, which may only be the gift of the spirit of carnal security, or the spirit of deadly slumber. And as you may easily attain to peace of conscience in an unrenewed state of heart, so may you in the same state attain to trouble and distress of conscience, which are perhaps even less ambiguous evidences of a work of the Spirit than peace itself. You may suffer under the strongest convictions of sin without these convictions being ever followed by conversion. After the commission of some sins more disgraceful, or more subversive of your worldly happiness, your character, your reputation, or your health, than many others, you may be visited with the strongest compunctions and the deepest sorrow; you may lament your iniquity and your folly, and possess many of the true signs of a genuine repentance, and yet never attain to genuine repentance.

There is a remarkable testimony to the truth of this in the example of Cain; he groaned beneath the weight of his sin and of God's disapprobation; he cried out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Judas, again, is another example; he could find no respite from the horrors of an accusing conscience but in a self-inflicted death. Yet these were merely the natural feelings of natural men, who were not even almost Christians; there can therefore be no doubt, that he who deserves that appellation may have advanced quite as far as these, and be as utterly destitute as they were of any portion of saving grace. But perhaps some among you will very naturally inquire, If this be so, how am I to discriminate? How am I, in my own case, to ascertain whether the enlightening of my understanding and of my conscience may not be equally fallacious with those of whom I have just heard; whether, after all, that which I have

imagined to be the light of the Sun of Righteousness, the rays which beam from the cross of the Redeemer, and have guided my feet into the way of peace, may not be an *ignis fatuus*, that is merely seducing me to my destruction. Be assured that God has not left himself without a witness, or his people without a guide, upon such important points as these. The enlightening of the understanding and conscience of the true Christian differs from that of which I have spoken in these important particulars; while it lights it guides; it is no barren light, it makes the soul grow in grace, and bring forth the fruits of holiness unto the praise of God. It is not only thus an influential knowledge, but it is a transforming knowledge,—as St. Paul says, “We all, as in a glass, behold the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image.” This is the invariable effect upon the heart of the altogether Christian; he is changed into some

blessed, although imperfect resemblance, of his divine Master. But if with an increase of knowledge, you are sensible of no increase of holiness, of humility, of self-distrust, of close-walking with God ; if, with peace of conscience, you are aware of no increase of dependance upon the finished salvation of your Lord and Saviour ; if, with trouble of conscience, you are sensible of no increased hatred of sin, no earnest strivings against it, even in its most secret and least suspected advances ; then, indeed, you have the greatest possible cause of apprehension and doubt, lest your foundation be on the sand, and your superstructure “the wood, hay, stubble,” which shall be scattered as dust before the whirlwind in the great day of the Lord.

The second characteristic which I have mentioned, as invariably found in the true people of God, and the counterfeit of which is not uncommonly seen in the

almost Christian, is the conversion of the will and the affections.

In the true people of God the conversion of the will is thorough and entire. It is changed by God's grace, drawn by the sweet but gentle influence of such natural arguments as persuade without compulsion; for though God uses infinite power, he uses no violence; he subdues the will, he does not compel it. He overcomes a sinner's prejudices as completely as he does his resistance. He does not force him to an obedience painful and odious, like the obedience of a slave, but wins him to an obedience agreeable and delightful, like the obedience of a son. He does not bring him to submit to God without, at the same time, teaching him that it is his choicest happiness and his truest welfare to do so, enabling him to love the will of God, and to say from his heart, "Thy commandments are not grievous." This, again,

marks another striking distinction between the real people of God, and the almost Christian. For you may be led to give up many a sinful gratification, to attend to many a spiritual duty, so that to the eye of man there may be no distinction whatever between the almost and altogether Christian. But how is it to Him who sees the heart? The distinction to the eye of God is as visible as if no outward act had ever been influenced, no outward service performed. He sees that the very sin which you relinquish is dearer to you than the duties you profess to practise. That while spiritual services are tedious and burdensome to you, sinful pleasures and delights really engage your hearts, and are as sweet and fascinating to you as they ever were. And yet with all this, your affections even, as well as your wills, may be in some degree influenced by religious exercises and feelings; you may often exclaim, ‘Would to God that I were what I ought to be! Would that

I were more consistent, and more devout, and more holy ! ' You may often sigh to think how much there is in religion which you cannot but admire, though to which you have never attained ; you may almost envy those who are more in earnest than yourself, and offer a few faint and languid aspirations that you may die the death of the righteous, and that your last end may be like his ; you may, in fact, however paradoxical it may appear, wish yourself holy, and yet remain willingly sinful ; you may wish that you were better, and yet never take one step towards amendment. Oh ! if heaven could be gained by wishing for it, how few would be excluded from its blessed abodes. When you hear an awakening or a convincing sermon, you may be perfectly unable to resist its appeals, or to answer its arguments ; when eternity is set before you with its certainty and its nearness, its delights or its terrors, you may be so powerfully affected

by it, that it may remain upon your memory, and influence your thoughts and feelings for days afterwards; when the love of Christ, and the atonement of Christ, and the sufferings and the agonies of Christ are dwelt upon, you may feel them to be the very ground of your heart; they may even draw tears from your eyes, but they may be such feelings as have been excited, or such tears as you have shed at many an affecting tragedy, or over many a foolish novel, the merely natural emotions of the merely natural man, and evidence neither a converted heart nor spiritual affections. Again, then, mark the contrast; to be altogether a Christian does not depend in any manner upon these transitory excitements; the true conversion of will and affections, is a holy, a constant, a calm and prayerful striving to render our will conformable in every point to the Divine will, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The almost Chris-

tian never desires or intends to do this ; if he even prays that his affections may be drawn off from some favourite sin, he does it as St. Augustine tells us he did while only almost a Christian, with the mental reservation that God should not do it now ; that the sin is too dear to be given up at present, but that at some more convenient season, or some to-morrow which will never come, his whole will shall be conformed and whole affections given to God.

The third point upon which I have proposed to consider the almost Christian is, the reformation of his life and conversation.

That both these may be to a certain and very great extent effected by one who is still in an unregenerate state, and therefore not among the true people of God, is evident, not only from common observation, but from the Word of God. Observe, for instance, this declaration of St. Peter, “ If after they have escaped

the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." It is clear that the apostle does not here speak of the true children of God, for we know that the latter end with them, will not be worse than the beginning, since he who is the author is also the finisher of their faith, and has promised "to keep that which they have committed to him against that day." St. Peter must therefore be delineating the precise class whom we are now considering, for he speaks of them as people who have had a head knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord; and even more than this, as people who have escaped for a time the pollutions of the world. Now this is just the case with the almost Christian; he may have advanced even far in outward reformation, as well as in knowledge, may have escaped the pol-

lutions of the world, and yet his latter end may be worse than his beginning. You will observe, the apostle does not say they have escaped the pollutions of the heart, but of the world; it is only an outward work that he is speaking of, but this outward work of reformation and amendment may have been a very striking and obvious one, and yet may have never passed the boundary which divides the almost from the altogether Christian. The motives which influence the two classes, and the spirits which guide them, are wholly different; and thus, though the converted man must be a reformed man, the reformed man may be as wholly distinct from the converted man in the sight of God, as darkness from light. For instance, even when the most completely reformed, you may have only exchanged one sin for another, a public sin which would disgrace you before men, for a private sin, known only to God; or you

may have put away many of your sins, only to retain some that are the dearest, and most indispensable; or you may change from a life of dishonesty and deceitfulness towards men, to a life of honesty and probity; while God, his honour and his glory, are as completely blotted from your memory and your heart in the latter state, as in the former. Do not deceive yourselves by imagining, even this must necessarily be the work of the Spirit of God. Be assured, he has no hand in anything so unscriptural and unholy. I believe that the great assistant of this kind of partial reformation is the devil. That it is he who helps men to relinquish some sins, only that he may satisfy their souls with this miserable compromise, and bind their remaining sins upon their hearts, with chains of iron.

I do not scruple to say, because the whole tenour of God's Word compels me, that you are not in reality nearer God in

this state of outward reformation when it extends no farther, which does not influence the secret conduct, or purify the thoughts, or convert the soul, than you were while in the most reckless course of open profligacy: you may imagine that you are daily ascending higher and higher towards heaven, that the walls of the celestial city are within your view; but be assured, upon the authority of God himself, that in attempting to reach them thus, it is with the miserable certainty of finally and irrevocably falling; and that at the very moment when you think that you have risen the highest, and attained the most nearly to the heavenly mansions, you are only the more certain of tumbling headlong from the dizzy height, and of plunging the deeper into the very lowest depths of hell beneath.

My brethren, in concluding this important subject, I would desire to impress its importance upon you, by enforcing a

single consideration ! You have an eternity before you, of which you must shortly be partakers ; an eternity which you cannot avoid, and out of which there will be no escape. Is it not, then, of unutterable consequence that you should ascertain where you are to spend it ? Can any thing which can engage your thoughts and your reflections possess one thousandth part the same degree of interest ? Then attend to me while I remind you of this unquestionable fact, that, whoever you are, whatever you are, whatever be your rank, whatever be your station, you must be either in a state of grace, or in a state of nature ; and according to this, when you come to die, you must find yourself either in a state of salvation or a state of condemnation. It is the altogether Christian who can alone be saved, the almost Christian will as certainly be condemned as the altogether sinful. You may, as it were, be suspended between heaven and earth while you live ; to-day, living for one world, and to-mor-

row vibrating towards another; but you cannot be suspended between heaven and hell when you die: to one or other, you must assuredly be carried; in one or other, your eternity must be spent.

Think you that it is any satisfaction to Judas, amidst his present agonies to know that he was once as near the Saviour as the beloved John; that he as often heard the same voice, sat at the same table, partook of the same instructions, and to the eye of all, but his Divine Master, appeared as entirely a disciple? Will it be any satisfaction to you, if you finally perish out of Christ, to reflect that there were hours in your life, when you sat among the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, partook of their instructions and their sacraments, and to the eye of even the holiest of men were ranked among them; that there were moments in your life when you were almost persuaded to cast in your lot with the people of God? Alas! so far from satisfaction, will it not add ten-

fold to your misery and remorse, to think how near you were then, to that blessedness from which you are now for ever shut out? O my brethren, there is not a soul among you who will be content on that day to be almost saved; be not then, I beseech you, content to-day with being almost Christians. Take, then, the subject before you, as affording materials for thinking, for I only offer it in that light, to the retirement of your own chambers; try yourselves honestly upon each of the heads which have been brought before you. Ask yourself whether the enlightening of your understanding in Divine things, has been accompanied by a corresponding influence upon your actions. Whether your peace of conscience flow from an undivided trust in the great atonement of our Divine Redeemer and a simple dependance upon his righteousness. Whether you desire to give up all your own will, even its most secret waywardnesses, to the will of God, to be governed

by him, and by him alone ; to yield all your affections to him, loving nothing in opposition to him, nothing more than him, nothing in comparison of him. Whether, lastly, your reformation of life and conduct flows from the one great principle of love to God, in Christ Jesus our Lord, even a grateful love flowing from a heart penetrated, subdued, and softened by a deep sense of all that our adorable Saviour has done and suffered for your soul. And now, beloved brethren, if there be one here present who has been led by the remarks which have been made, to say secretly, but from his heart, “ Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian ; ” almost I resolve to part from that dear sin, to give up that cherished lust, to avoid that evil companion, to renounce those things which I know are separating between me and my God; almost I determine this day to devote myself, body and soul, to my Redeemer; how earnestly, how affectionately

would I entreat you, by the mercies of God, by the blood of Christ, by the salvation of your never-dying spirit, by the duration of eternity, to rest not here: to cast yourself in secret, fervent prayer before the mercy-seat, and, like him of old, not to leave it without a blessing ; not to suffer those blessed resolutions to escape, as probably many before have done, from your mind until you have, by God's grace, closed with the offers of redeeming love, and become, not only almost, but altogether such as he was to whom the words of the text were spoken, Christ's here, and Christ's for ever.

SERMON V.

THE BELIEVER'S ASSURED INHERITANCE.

1 PETER I. 3—5.

"BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHICH ACCORDING TO HIS ABUNDANT MERCY HATH BEGOTTEN US AGAIN UNTO A LIVELY HOPE BY THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD, TO AN INHERITANCE INCORRUPTIBLE, AND UNFILED, AND THAT FADETH NOT AWAY, RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU, WHO ARE KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH UNTO SALVATION."

THE Christian's duties of thanksgiving and praise for all the temporal blessings, by which he is surrounded, were set before you from this place, upon the last Sabbath. In these he can unite with all creation; for by a strong and beautiful figure of speech we find the Psalmist

calling upon the sun and moon, the fire and hail, the snow and vapours, the creeping things, and flying fowls, to praise the Lord. But there are also subjects upon which, if the Christian, as is his bounden duty, offers thanksgivings to his God, he must offer them alone: upon which the sun and moon, the mountains and the hills are silent; for which the cattle and creeping things have no voice; in which even his fellow-men, if they have never turned their thoughts to the great and holy subjects which engage his mind, if they are not in fact also his fellow-Christians, cannot unite with him; in which none can unite, but those who have experienced the blessings, and partaken of the benefits of which he is a partaker, and are looking forward to the joys which he reasonably and unhesitatingly anticipates.

A remarkable instance of the truth of this observation is afforded us in the words of the text. We there find the

apostle rendering blessings to God for mercies, which none but the true Christian, the man who is really living not to time, but to eternity, who has really passed from a state of indifference to the things of God, in which all are created, to a state of real and earnest participation in them, can experience.

It will not therefore, by God's grace, be unprofitable to analyze this instance of the apostle's thanksgiving. And there are two ways in which, while I am so employed, you may render the consideration useful to yourselves; first, by considering how far you can individually join in the thanksgiving of the text. And, secondly, by reflecting what is the position in which you individually stand, with regard to God and to eternity, with regard to your own souls and their salvation, if you cannot join at all in these praises; which, though, in the case before us, indicted by an apostle, have unquestionably been, and shall unques-

tionably be, the language of the people of God in every age, and in every clime, till time shall be no more. I merely throw out these reflections for the personal consideration of you who hear me; it is not my intention to dwell upon them, even for a moment; my business is simply to explain the text; it is yours, if you desire to profit by it, thus to apply it to your own consciences and hearts: and may the Almighty God direct you, that you hear not the Word of God in vain!

We proceed then, to offer a simple analysis of the words before us. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I. That he has “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

II. That he has prepared an inheritance for us.

III. That he has promised to keep us for the inheritance so prepared.

The first object then, 'of the apostle's

thanksgiving is,—that God has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It is natural that the first step in the Christian life should be the first subject of the Christian's thanksgiving. God has begotten us again. Yes, my brethren, as surely as that you were once born of flesh and blood, so surely, if you are now on the straight and narrow path, now preparing for a heavenly inheritance, have you been born again of the Spirit, made new creatures in Christ Jesus, taught to put off the old man with his lusts, the world with its unholy pleasures, self with its sins. It is for this new creation in the soul, that the apostle first praises God.

Observe how remarkably strong are the expressions of his thanksgiving. He does not say, "Blessed be God that he has reformed us, or improved us; that he has made us better than we were in the

days of our ignorance and sin," but that he has "begotten us again." How striking must be the alteration; how entire must be the change of motives and feelings, of inclination and practice, to justify such a term as this! Could such a phrase be ever applicable if the work were only a partial work; if we had left off some sins while we cleaved to others, if we neglected some duties while we practised others? We would ask any unprejudiced person among you, if you had met with such a phrase in any other book than the Bible, would you have had a moment's doubt as to the meaning of the author? Would you not yourself have said, Surely the change here alluded to must be total and entire to justify such an expression? There must be the implantation of a new principle in the heart to give the full meaning to such language. And if the phrase, "begotten again," could lead you to this result, would not the declaration, "God has begotten us," lead

you to another result, viz., that the work here spoken of cannot be your own. If, by the unaided efforts of your own resolutions, you could turn from a death in sin to "a life unto righteousness," would it not be a total misapplication of language to say, that by such a change God had begotten you again? Most assuredly it would. The apostle in such a case might have said, "Blessed be God that we have begotten ourselves again;" but he could never have said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us," unless, as it most certainly is, the work of this change in heart and life were wholly and entirely from first to last, the work of God himself. Be assured, therefore, that if you trust to yourself, you will never be influenced by anything in yourself, to turn from the follies and pleasures of sin to holiness and to God, but that you must prayerfully, faithfully, constantly, seek a

power far greater than your own; in fact, that you must unceasingly desire, and as unceasingly ask for, the sweet and gentle, but still powerful and prevailing, influence of God's quickening Spirit. It is he who finds you, as the Scripture describes you, and as you feel yourselves to be, "dead in trespasses and sins." It is he who breathes into your soul the spiritual life of the children of God. It is he who sees you fast bound by the thousand chains which the corruptions of your own nature, and the fascinations of this world, have wound around you; and who, by his all-powerful influence, dissolves these chains, and frees you from your captivity; and having given you the spirit of light and life, gives you also the desire and the will to walk worthy of your high calling, and to devote your newly-created powers to the service of your Redeemer and your God. It is for this that the apostle blesses the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

and rightly blesses him ; for it is the act of God's own free and sovereign grace, utterly undeserved, and equally undeserved, by every individual object of it. If I then address any who have attained to one scriptural thought of God ; to one heartfelt desire to know and to serve him ; to one prayerful aspiration to be what he would have you to be, and what he alone can make you, you will most readily and most heartily join in the thanksgiving of the text ; and while others, even the possessors of immortal souls, the heirs of immortality, are like the mountains and the hills, sunk in a silence which their hearts cannot enable them to break, you will join in saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" for this undeserved mark of his compassion and love. To him be all the praise and all the glory. To you, then, we would only add, earnestly beseech him to carry forward the work of mercy, which he alone could

have commenced; and be assured, that he who has begun the good work will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ; but that, nevertheless, according to his own gracious declaration, even for this, he will be inquired of by you. But we must turn to the second great and blessed subject of the apostle's praises, the "lively hope," which next excites his thanksgivings.

There are those, my brethren, strange as it may seem to you, who, when they think of spiritual religion, the religion of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, think of it as some gloomy and forbidden mysticism; something of which they feel themselves to be ignorant, and are rather inclined to thank God that they are so, believing that the reception of it would deprive them of the harmless joys and innocent pleasures of life, and that all religion is a morose and melancholy thing. This is an argument against the reception of the truths of the Gospel, so universal, that it

is impossible to avoid alluding to it; and yet so unscriptural, that the most simple reader of God's Word can overthrow it. Look at the manner in which the apostle expresses himself in the very words we are considering. He blesses God that he has begotten us—to what? To a lively hope, a cheerful expectation, a soul-delighting and heart-elevating joy, by the resurrection from the dead; to an “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” Does this appear to be the language of a man who saw anything in religion of privation or restraint, of gloom or despondency? Is it not rather the expression of one who felt that his greatest present happiness, quite as much as his future welfare, depended entirely on those views of eternity upon which the eye of faith had now opened? He says, in other words, ‘Blessed be God that by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which was the seal and sign that his atonement had been accepted for the

remission of our sins, blessed be God that I have now been created anew in heart and affections, in motives and desires; that I am filled with a lively hope of a future inheritance, which no sorrow can quench, and which death itself shall not be able to destroy.' How elevating such a subject ought to be! How cheering such a hope must be, where it is rightly received into the heart! There is nothing gloomy, nothing desponding here. Has the world, and I address myself to you who know the world, yes, to you who know it best, and have tried it the most eagerly, and enjoyed it the most unscrupulously, has it, with all its immunities and rewards, its wealth for the covetous, its rewards for the ambitious, its luxuries for the indolent, its gratifications for the sensual,—has it anything to offer which can stand a moment's competition with the Christian's lively hope of a future but yet a certain inheritance? No, brethren, you know that

it has not. You know that there is this, if there were nothing else, which blasts every sinful pleasure of the world, and is as the never-dying worm at its heart's core, even the revealed declaration of our God, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth: and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Nay, more than this, were there no judgment to come, there is something in the very transitoriness of these enjoyments, the very feeling that they are gone, never to return; that twenty, thirty, forty years of enjoyment have all passed away, of which you cannot purchase back one hour, if you would give a thousand worlds for it; that must make the worldly man, in his moments of reflection, a melancholy man. Can they be otherwise than melancholy, whose pleasures are merely for the passing day, who have no comforts laid up for old age and weakness, no

consolation ready for a day of sickness; no hope, no certain hope, in their death? No! be assured that the end of that mirth, as the wise man says, "is heaviness." What would they give, who scoff at the Christian's hope, who call religion a melancholy thing; what would the happiest, the most thoughtless, the most successful of the sons of earth give or rather what would they not give, when on a bed of sickness, and about to enter the valley of the shadow of death—for a single hour of that peace and joy and strong consolation which the true believer can alone experience; which is his settled portion now, and which shall be his portion throughout eternity?

But we must pass from the apostle's thanksgiving for the "lively hope" of the Christian, to the consideration of that inheritance for which he hopes, and the blessed and invaluable nature of it.

It is called, in the text, an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth

not away." Consider, then, for a moment the nature and the blessedness of such a prospect; and see whether it is not likely to be an influential motive, not merely to present peace and happiness, but to present holiness and gratitude towards God. You are placed here upon earth but for a short and uncertain period; for the longest life that ever yet was lived, could, at the end of it, only enable its possessor to say with Jacob, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." We will suppose that while here, your lot is the happiest ever enjoyed by mortals, still all that you possess is transitory, all you do is defiled, all that you love and enjoy is perpetually fading from you. The most durable of your possessions cannot be secured to you, even for the day that passeth over you. The morning sun sees you rejoicing in your abundance, the evening sun may behold you destitute and impoverished. The year opens upon you surrounded by an affectionate family,

closely united to some beloved relative or friend; how will you venture to assure yourself that it shall not, before its close, see you bereft of every joy that gladdens life; separated from the friend that cheers, or the child that endears it.

Now turn your eyes from what you are to what you shall be, from what you now possess, to what is promised you hereafter. An inheritance is placed before you, in which everything is in its nature entirely the reverse of all that you are now possessing, of which the enjoyment is declared, by the unerring Word of God, to be eternal, for it is an inheritance indestructible: in which no taint of sin shall ever pass upon it, for it is an inheritance undefiled: in which no change shall ever interrupt or diminish the happiness of it, for it is an “inheritance that fadeth not away.” No sound of sorrow shall ever be heard within these blissful abodes. The wealth laid up in store for you in those imperishable garners shall

never be exhausted. The friends you knew on earth who have entered there, shall go no more out for ever; they are in their Father's house, rejoicing in their Redeemer's presence, and beholding his glory.

How delightful is the thought, how blessed the anticipation, that not a person whom we have loved on earth, if a real child of God, shall be absent from our future inheritance, not a joy in which, as Christians, we have delighted, that we shall not find awaiting us, but perfectly purified, and unspeakably magnified, in our Redeemer's kingdom! That, indeed, is well worthy the name of an inheritance, where all are heirs, and yet where nothing is divided, but where each shall enjoy an abundance of which no mortal tongue can tell the extent; where all that is seen and heard, and made in any manner the subject of our senses, shall minister delight to them, to an extent now utterly inconceivable; where our communion with God

shall not be momentary, but perpetual ; where our perfect union with our Redeemer, and with all the inhabitants of his kingdom shall be of such a nature that it shall form the one great subject of our thanksgiving, the one great crowning joy of all our joys throughout eternity.

Such is a faint and imperfect outline—alas ! how faint and imperfect !—of that blissful inheritance, for which the apostle blesseth God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he has bestowed it upon his people.

But there is yet one peculiar feature, which to every true and obedient believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, must yield, while in this world, the highest encouragement, the greatest satisfaction. It is, says the apostle, an inheritance “reserved for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation :” that is, in other words, This glorious inheritance is kept for you, and you are kept for it. Here is a boundless motive for gratitude, the

one substantial ground for the present peace of the Christian: not that there is in some far distant clime an inheritance which, by some possibility, may one day be attained, but of which you can possess nothing like an assurance here below. Would this be comfort? There might arise in your minds a certain undefinable longing for something which appeared desirable, when opposed to the comparative worthlessness of all in which your hands are engaged, or for which your hearts are striving; but it would not yield that peace to which we have already alluded, which can defy the world and its impositions, the flesh and its temptations, the devil and his threats. It is then this peculiar feature of the Christian's inheritance, which can and will, and, blessed be God, daily and hourly, to the humble follower of our Lord and Saviour, does bestow a peace of mind, and a consolation which can defy all worldly troubles and afflictions, and place its possessor in a

state where they shall never reach him,—the fact, and the assurance of that fact, that heaven is reserved for him, and he, by God's grace, preserved for heaven.

There are times when you, I speak now to you and to you alone, who are enabled to thank God that he has begotten you again unto this lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, who have reason to hope that you are the unworthy partakers of this change of heart, and of this change of life, of which we have been speaking,—there are times when you may feel doubtful whether you shall ever arrive at the one great object of your anticipation and of your prayers; an entrance into the kingdom and joy of our Lord.

Now, my brethren, at such moments call to mind the declarations of the text, and see whether this will not turn your silence into thanksgiving, your heaviness into joy. The revealed Word of God

then, by God's power that you are kept, but it is through your own faith. If this be absent the promise is void. You are not told that you are kept by God's power, without a lively influential faith. Man may tell you so ; but be assured God has never told you so. He who has appointed the end has also appointed the means ; and those means are a true, living, active, and obeying faith ; a faith which worketh by love ; a faith which knows, and which honours, and delights to honour, even the very least of God's commandments ; a faith which, by uniting you to your Redeemer, brings you within the citadel ; and by causing you to cleave to your Redeemer, keeps you within it.

Rejoice, therefore, in the Lord, my Christian brethren, and glorify him in your bodies and your spirits, which are his ; for his unerring Word has declared, “the Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy

shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil : he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.” How astonishing a promise ! Three times within two verses does the Almighty pledge himself to preserve every obedient and believing servant “from this time forth even for evermore.” As, therefore, you have been forgiven much, and as you have been promised much, so will you love much, obey much, practise much, of all that your Lord requires of you ; but still you will cast all these duties away from you as the ground either of your merits or your stability, and will let your morning and evening song for ever be on earth as it will ever be your song in heaven, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his

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abundant mercy, hath begotten us to a lively hope by the resurrection from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

SERMON VI.

THE DEVICES OF SATAN.

2 COR. II. 11.

"WE ARE NOT IGNORANT OF HIS DEVICES."

THE devices of Satan, our great spiritual enemy, are among the most fearful dangers of the Christian. It is not merely that we are "very far gone from original righteousness," as our Article expresses it; that we are conceived and born in sin, as the Bible reveals to us; that we carry about us a body of sin and death, and within us "a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," as our own experience fully establishes; but there is yet more, far more than this,

to impede our heavenward progress, and ruin our souls. There is in every one's path, and at every one's heart, a cunning and powerful, a busy and indefatigable evil spirit, seeking to devour.

It is the fashion of the so-called philosophers of the present day to disbelieve, or affect to disbelieve, the very existence of this evil spirit, and by this means most effectually to forward his endeavours. It is the theory of another class to represent Satan to be a mere name, to express an evil quality, or a collection of evil principles, but to deny him all personality and existence as a spirit of power and darkness. While there are few even of the most established and enlightened Christians, who have any just conceptions of the extent of Satan's power, the immensity of his wisdom, the depth of his cunning, the infinity of his resources.

It shall be my endeavour, then, to awaken the minds of my hearers to this great and important subject, feeling con-

vinced that as our contempt of an enemy often leads to our own defeat, so nothing, under God's grace, will tend more to promote in us all holy circumspection and watchfulness of conduct, than just and scriptural views of those devices by which the great enemy of our souls is for ever carrying on his exterminating warfare. Before, however, I enter upon the devices of Satan, it is necessary that I should prepare the way by speaking of this fallen spirit himself. And here, without referring to the different passages of Scripture which demonstrate the truth of what I advance, I shall confine myself simply to the descriptions contained in them, adding nothing of speculation or of human fancy to the plain historical statements of the Divine Word. We find, then, from that Word which cannot lie, that before time began; the devil, who is called also in holy writ, Abaddon, Apollyon, Beelzebub, Belial, and by many other appellations, "fell from heaven," with a large assem-

blage of evil spirits, who “kept not their first estate,” but were “cast down by God into hell,” and are “reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” During the time that he is thus reserved for judgment, we further find that he exercises, by God’s permission, a species of government, in the realms of darkness, over these evil spirits who fell with him; that he is represented by our Lord as possessing a kingdom, and one never divided against itself, but thoroughly united in implacable and boundless hatred against God and his Christ, against the Lord and his people, and indeed against the whole human race, in whose everlasting destruction he is perpetually engaged. He is called, also, the “god of this world,” “the ruler of the darkness of this world,” “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,” because he directs and co-operates with evil men to their ruin, being a lying spirit in the

mouth of false prophets, and false teachers ; a spirit of dishonesty in the thief, of lust in the adulterer, of revenge in the murderer, of enmity and disobedience to God in every heart which has not been renewed and purified, which is not directed and governed by the Spirit of God. We are thus, for instance, told distinctly in God's Word, that it was Satan who prevailed on David to number the people ; that it was Satan who tempted Peter to deny, and Judas to betray, his Master ; and Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Ghost.

We are assured also that he resists men in their efforts to do good, as well as aids and assists and tempts them to do evil ; thus we are told by the prophet Zechariah (third chapter), "that when Joshua, the high priest, and the Jews, assembled to rebuild the temple of the Lord, Satan stood at Joshua's right hand to resist him ;" and when Job was pronounced by the Almighty himself to be one who

"feared God and eschewed evil," Satan in the accursed jealousy of his heart, rested not until he had exhausted the whole quiver of his fiery darts to induce the patient sufferer to "curse God to the face."

Having said thus much to establish from holy writ the personality, and to give some faint idea of the occupations and employments of this ruler of the powers of darkness, I shall proceed to speak a little more in detail of some of those numerous and subtle devices by which he carries forward the great counterscheme at which he has been working since time began, to rob God of his glory in this lower world, the Lord Jesus of his purchased people, and us of our souls.

It is evident, that if we were to attempt to enumerate the devices by which Satan beguiles the people of the world, and leads captive whom he will, every occupation, every amusement, every person,

every object which engages them must be made the subject of our consideration. This is impossible, and, therefore, for the purpose of contracting the subject within something like reasonable limits, I shall confine myself to those devices wherewith he beguiles the souls of men in reference to spiritual things; considering them under two heads, and dividing my subject into three discourses, limiting myself on the present occasion to, 1st, The devices with which Satan beguiles men before their conversion to God; and in the two next discourses to the devices of Satan after men's conversion.

We proceed, then, this morning, to consider some of the devices of Satan, by which he retains possession of the souls of men during their unconverted state.

The first device which I shall bring before you, because amongst the most obvious and most successful, is his retaining men in bondage to himself through

the agency of their friends and companions. "A threefold cord," said the wise man, "is not quickly broken." "Union is strength," for evil as well as for good, for sin as well as for holiness. One of Satan's great objects, therefore, is to keep you in the companionship and friendship of those who acknowledge and serve the devil's three great representatives here on earth, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." As long as you are contented to live upon terms of friendship with these enemies of your soul, and with those who follow them, Satan is content; he will neither distrust nor harass you. The nearer in friendship and relationship these evil companions are to you, the more completely does it answer the purpose of your wily adversary. Thus, in the case of holy Job, the friend of whom Satan made the greatest use in endeavouring to draw him from God, was his wife. She it was, who, in the most trying hour

of his mental and bodily suffering, came to him with the taunting inquiry, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" following it by the dreadful advice, "Curse God, and die!" Can we doubt in whose service she was employed, or at whose instigation she acted so iniquitous a part? Thus, again, in the case of our Lord, when Satan had been so effectually foiled in his own person, and defeated in his most powerful assault by the Lord Jesus, whom did he employ to tempt the all-perfect Saviour? Was it not one of the best beloved of the apostles? to whose well-intended but insidious advice our Lord was compelled to reply, "Get thee behind me, Satan." So, brethren, will you find it in your own experience, that of all the devices by which Satan leads you captive at his will, the first, the most frequent, and the most successful, is through the instrumentality of your relatives and friends. What an argument is this against forming intimacies, and

still more, permanent connexions with those who fear not God. If you are in earnest in your soul's salvation, you will, above all things, and before all things, form your friendships, and endeavour to unite yourself only to those who appear to possess more of God's Spirit than you have; you will seek their company, their friendship, their love. The last day only can determine how many a brand has been plucked from the burning by the instrumentality of Christian friendship. On the other hand, how many are there among you at this moment, who, if you spake the truth, would be obliged to confess, that one of the strongest and most influential motives which detain you from giving yourselves to God with a whole heart, and "following the Lord fully," is to be found in the enticements and allurements, the love or the fear of your relatives, your friends, or your companions.

The second device by which the devil

tempts the unconverted, is by the inconsistencies of the converted, that is, of real Christians. This forms one of the most dangerous stumbling-blocks in the path of the unconverted.

Satan is continually disseminating, exaggerating, and inventing instances of the inconsistence of religious people. ‘Observe,’ he says, ‘the pride, or the worldliness, or the vanity, or the covetousness of one who professes more godliness than those around him. Observe his hastiness or moroseness, his unkindness and uncharitableness, his melancholy and gloominess: will you seek for a deeper feeling, and a more entire reception of a religion which produces such fruits as these?’ is the language of the tempter. These are, doubtless, in many instances, the invention of him, who, as the Word of God assures us, was “a liar from the beginning;” in too many instances, however, we acknowledge that they are founded in truth; but then, brethren, to be aware of

this device of Satan, you must recollect that these sins and short-comings of religious people are not because they are religious, but notwithstanding they are religious. They are not the effect of their religion; they would have existed, and in all probability with tenfold acrimony, if they had never been religious at all. The morose man would have been morose; the covetous man, covetous; the proud man, proud; if he had never heard of religion. And, without doubt, he would have been ten times more morose, or covetous, or proud, than he now is. The device of Satan consists in teaching you to view these things as the fruits of his religion, that thus the doctrines of grace, and the practice of ungodliness, may become associated in your mind as inseparable companions. While Satan takes a peculiar pleasure in blazoning these failings of God's people forth, and in making them the subject of your thoughts and conversation; he takes

peculiar pains also, that you should never know how poignant is the regret, how deep the repentance, how free and full the acknowledgment of these infirmities and sins, before a throne of grace, by those who commit them. Satan shows you the children of God in their hours of weakness; it would defeat his guilty purpose, were he able to tell you of their penitence and contrition, of their bitter tears and heartfelt prayers, and free and full forgiveness, when they have drawn near to the blood of sprinkling, and again found peace for their souls. His purpose is fully answered if he can thus induce you to hate and despise and calumniate holy persons and holy things. Such a state of mind, on your part, will widen the breach already existing between you and your God, and will stand as a wall of adamant in the way of your soul's approach to the Saviour. You will naturally be too proud to imitate the example, to seek the counsel, to desire the intimacy,

or to love the religion of men, whom the devil teaches you to despise; and by thus keeping you from the servants of Christ, he will often too fatally succeed in keeping you from their Master.

The third device of Satan, and closely following upon the steps of the former, indeed necessarily connected with it, is by misrepresenting religion itself. To the young, Satan takes particular care to pourtray all true and vital religion as a gloomy and melancholy subject, which will rob you of your cheerfulness and joy. To the weak and timid, as a difficult and dangerous enterprise, upon which you had better not embark, but "sit down first and count the cost;" not as our Lord gave the same advice, that you may rise up with resolution and strength to begin to build, and to be enabled to finish, but that you may never enter upon a course which would free you from Satan's captivity, and number you among the Lord's freemen. It is for this purpose

that he often shows you while in an unconverted state, the cross and its dangers, but hides from you the crown and its glories.

If you value your own souls you will never rest contentedly with the views of religion which are given you by its enemies. Search the Word of God for yourselves, there only can you find the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ in its purity and its perfections. Attend carefully, while under a scriptural ministry ; "Faith," the apostle expressly assures us, "faith cometh by hearing." Compare what you hear, not with what those around you tell you, or with what Satan through the instrumentality of your own evil heart suggests, but compare what you hear with what you read in God's own word ; and you will, by God's grace, soon be made sensible of the truth, and the value of all the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and will find the service of

the Lord Jesus Christ to be perfect freedom, and all his paths peace.

The devices which I have hitherto enumerated, are such as the devil practises with effect against all the unconverted. But he is obliged to have recourse to other, and less palpable engines, when, either from the direct operations of the Spirit of God, or the temporary effect of some awakening discourse, or some afflicting providence, the unconverted man is in a measure awakened from his stupor, and led to begin to inquire after Divine things.

The fourth device, then, which I shall mention, is usually applied by Satan to persons in the state of mind to which I have just referred, as beginning to inquire ; and may be denominated, inspiring hard thoughts of God, and discouraging thoughts of the way of salvation. When the devil perceives that you are becoming desirous to turn to God, he often begins

by representing our heavenly Father to you, as a hard task-master; a harsh and severe judge: as one who loves to take vengeance upon the ungodly, and rejoices in the destruction of the sinner. O how different from the truth, how widely different from the character in which God himself reveals himself to the hearts of his children, when he speaks peace to the troubled soul, and pardon to the penitent through the blood of Jesus; when he says, "I, even I, am he who blotteth out your iniquities for my own sake, and will not remember your sin;" when he declares that he "willeth not the death of a sinner," but that all should come to repentance. Even Satan, for he once experienced God's tenderness, even that condemned spirit knows that "God is love," though he knows it only to the increase of his misery and wretchedness and pain; and he therefore knows that his only hope of retaining the sinner in his cruel bondage, is by misrepresenting

and defaming God: for let the sinner possess but one view, one true and scriptural view of the forgiving tenderness of God in Christ Jesus, let him see but one ray of that redeeming love which is continually shining from the cross of the Redeemer, and Satan's power in his heart is for ever broken, Satan's reign there for ever at an end. As soon, therefore, as you are beginning to turn to God, Satan uses his every effort to malign him. He assures you that God is a jealous God, a severe God, a God taking pleasure in the death of a sinner, and, therefore, God will not pardon you; that God is your enemy, that he views you as a task-master views his slave, and rejoices over your burden, and your inability to bear it; that your heart is so hard that you cannot repent, and that God would not accept you even if you could; that your sins are so great and yourself so vile, that it is vain, utterly vain, for you to approach a holy God. When you

hear the freest invitations to come to the Saviour for pardon and acceptance, Satan suggests that, whatever others may have done, you have sinned beyond the reach of such invitations as these, and therefore that it is vain for you to seek a Saviour. But if he finds that all these devices are fruitless in repressing your desire, and that you are still anxious, increasingly anxious, to accept the invitation, then he changes his plan, advises you by all means to fly for help and deliverance to the Lord, but first, to mortify and to forsake your sins, to be humbled and sanctified, holy and just and good, and then to go to the Saviour. These are indeed, most dangerous delusions, but, blessed be God, they will disperse at the touch of the spear of the Divine Word.

Does Satan suggest to you that you are too vile and too sinful to go to the Lord Jesus Christ? he might with equal truth have kept Naaman, the leper, from the cleansing waters. It was because he had

a leprosy, that he was sent to wash in Jordan; it is because you are thus guilty and thus polluted, that you must fly to the cleansing blood of Christ.

Does Satan again urge you to be humbled, and to labour after holiness, to fit you to come to Christ? This, again, is merely to keep you for ever from him.

No! When you have received Christ, when you have cast yourself upon him who is alone mighty to save for salvation, and upon the strong for strength, then you shall be enabled to perform all your duties, and fulfil, however imperfectly, all God's requirements; but you may exercise all self-denial, and partake of all ordinances, and dig for ever in the mines of humiliation and contrition and holiness, and never find there the precious gems of pardon and peace. Cast your soul with confidence upon the Lord Jesus for free pardon and justification in your present state, be it what it may, and he will give you all these things, which

Satan prompts you to seek for yourself; a softened heart to feel and to forsake your sins, a godly sorrow to work repentance unto salvation not to be repented of, a spirit of holy consistent obedience, to run the way of God's commandments.

To conclude: in bringing these different devices of Satan before you, and in attributing them to their right author, I feel that I am performing a great and imperative duty, as the minister of God, and one which, by God's grace, may be made useful to some souls, in tearing away the mask from the face of this deceiver. There is, however, one danger attending this subject, against which I could desire to guard you, and which naturally flows from the considerations which have been brought before you to-day. It is this: you may, perhaps, be tempted to reason thus; If all these different hindrances in the way of my salvation, if all these suggestions which have often arisen in my heart, be indeed

devices of the devil, then surely I am guiltless; the fault is Satan's, and the condemnation must be Satan's, that I am not yet converted to God. Brethren, be assured that this is only an additional delusion from the tempter; all revelation contradicts it.

For behold the sin of our first parents; the Word of God assures us that there, in a most marked and peculiar manner, Satan was the tempter; that it was a device which sprang immediately from himself, and yet, alas! how tremendous is the curse which Adam's disobedience entailed upon himself and his posterity.

So, again, with David, the Word of God as expressly declares, "Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chron. xxi. 1); yet I need not remind you that the punishment fell upon the guilty David.

This is not only true, but, like all the dealings of our heavenly Father, it is just. If Satan could compel you to the sin

to which he tempts you, then, indeed, it would be most cruel, most unjust, that you should suffer for it: but it is impossible; Satan has no power beyond the mere power of alluring and enticing; if he had, our Lord would have been obliged to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and not merely tempted to do so; and Job would as assuredly have been compelled to have cursed God. Therefore St. James most truly says, “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed:” he does not say, “When he is drawn away by the invincible power of the devil.” The devil has no such power; he never has drawn, and never can draw away, any single individual, unless in complete accordance with that individual’s own inclination, and perfectly in union with that individual’s lusts.

It is, therefore, vain to endeavour to throw upon Satan the guilt of your distance from God, your non-conversion to

the Lord Jesus ; were this the truth, our Lord never could have said, “ Ye will not come unto me that you might have life.” There is no natural inability in any man to seek the salvation of Jesus ; that there is unquestionably a moral inability, a dislike, a disinclination, a violent opposition of the will, only enhances our guilt, and will increase our punishment. But do not deceive yourselves by attributing your alienation from God to a power which you cannot, by God’s grace, successfully oppose. No ; you can resist the devil, or you would not have been commanded to do so ; you can, by God’s grace, vanquish him, or you would never be condemned for your failure. In obeying the temptations of Satan, you simply perform your own will ; you follow your own inclination ; no man can profess to say when he sins, that he does so simply to please the devil. No ; Satan and the sinner invariably agree upon this point ; you are perfectly well aware that you

sin simply to please yourselves, and it would therefore be too much to expect that Satan should bear the burden and the condemnation.

Keep in mind, then, brethren, that this is a solemn declaration of God, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you;" none ever acted upon it, in humble dependance upon the Holy One of Israel for strength, and was disappointed. However evil men or evil spirits may misrepresent the Gospel or its followers, be sure of this, for it is the Word of the living God, that, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." But be ye equally sure of this, that that gracious Saviour who has said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out," now invites, nay, beseeches the most hardened and the

most guilty, the youngest, and the most weak and feeble among you to be “reconciled to God,” through his precious blood; and that neither man nor Satan can keep you from him, if you be willing to accept the blessed invitation: may God of his infinite mercy grant that you may this day receive it to the salvation of your souls!

SERMON VII.

THE DEVICES OF SATAN.

2 COR. II. 11.

"WE ARE NOT IGNORANT OF HIS DEVICES."

IN addressing you in my last discourse upon the very important and deeply instructive subject of the devices of Satan, I intentionally confined my observations to those devices with which he particularly besets the path of the unconverted. We on that occasion, reviewed the danger from our own families and friends; from worldly and infidel and ungodly companions; from the inconsistencies and sins of real Christians; from Satan's misrepresentation of religious persons and

of religion itself; from his suggesting hard thoughts of God, and discouraging views of the way of salvation; and, lastly, when all other devices fail to keep you from the Saviour, the continual efforts which Satan makes to tempt you to become a Saviour to yourself, and to strive after holiness, humility, and sanctification through your own efforts, instead of coming at once to that Redeemer, who can alone enable you to fulfil these duties, and who must himself be made unto you, "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

We are, on the present occasion, to endeavour to set before you some of those devices, wherewith this indefatigable enemy of all godliness besets the path of the real children of God, seeking to drive you out of that stronghold into which the Word and the power of God have called you; or failing in this, to injure your peace, to destroy

your happiness, and to change "the ways of pleasantness" into paths of painfulness, and the "light burden" which a Saviour's love would lay upon his people, into a galling yoke and a heavy bondage.

May the Spirit of wisdom and of love and of a sound mind direct us in the investigation!

As in the last discourse, I endeavoured to follow some little degree of order in arranging the devices of Satan, from the most plain and obvious and common-place, with which he attempts the hearts of all, to those with which he more immediately assails the heart, when beginning to feel desirous to turn unto the living God; so would I, on the present occasion, endeavour, in a similar manner, to follow the steps of the destroyer, only premising, that there can be no certain rule in these things, but that since God's Word has declared that, "as in water face answereth to face, so

the heart of man to man;”* the experience of one may probably be the experience of many, and the dangers and difficulties of others, may lead you to foresee and forearm against your own.

The first device, then, with which Satan often bewilders the mind and endangers the peace of the new convert, is by perplexing him with the difficult and incomprehensible subject of the secret decrees of God, predestination, election, and reprobation.

No sooner have you begun to feel the comfort of those declarations of the revealed Word that, “God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” and that “whoever will, may take of the water of life freely;” no sooner, in obedience to the many commands and invitations to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and find peace for your soul, have you in much weakness and trembling drawn

* See Proverbs xxix. 19.

near with faith to this blessed and adorable Redeemer, trusting, that poor and miserable and sinful as you feel yourself to be, he will neither despise nor reject you, than Satan, if you possess an inquiring mind, often produces this temptation : He will say, Is it not true, that "God hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us," I quote the words of the Seventeenth Article of our Church, "to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them, by Christ, to everlasting salvation?" Yes, this is a solemn truth of God, built upon all Scripture, and recognised in all the formularies of our truly scriptural Church. But then observe the deduction which Satan draws from it. He suggests, If this be true, that God hath appointed to eternal felicity those whom he hath chosen out of the world, as "vessels before prepared for glory" to manifest his mercy and love;

then is it also true that God has in like manner appointed to damnation, those whom he hath chosen out of the world, for the purpose of manifesting his severity and wrath. Then follow in the train of this device of the evil one, doubts and fears, and perplexing considerations which destroy the peace of the new convert, and sometimes almost lead him to absolute despair. He is led to reason with himself; ‘If I am appointed by God to condemnation, what matter to me the love of Jesus Christ, and the offers of his mercy; the decree has gone forth, the Word of God is immutable, and one jot or one tittle shall never pass away till all be fulfilled in the condemnation of those whom God has, before the foundation of the world, appointed to destruction.’

Brethren, whenever you are thus tempted by the evil one, bear this in mind; we know nothing of God’s decrees except as he has seen fit to reveal them.

Now we do not scruple to say, that there is no single passage in Scripture, and no combination of passages which reveal to us any thing so derogatory to the character of God, and so entirely contradictory to every attribute of God, as that he should decree any single individual, irrespectively of that individual's character and conduct, to everlasting condemnation. When, therefore, Satan would harass and distress your mind by such a delusion, your answer is this,— Of God's secret decrees I know nothing, for God's own Word has said, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God;” but there is one decree which God has seen fit to publish before men and angels by the mouth of his Incarnate Son, which, blessed be God, I do know, and which so entirely contradicts the falsehood which Satan calls a decree of the living God, that I am satisfied at once that it is a mere device of the tempter; God's decree is this, that “Whosoever,”

without a single exception, “ believeth in the Son shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” Upon this decree, proclaimed and ratified and sealed on Calvary, I am content to rest my soul for time and for eternity; Satan himself cannot impugn it; “ Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

But with the young convert Satan has yet far other more successful, because more hidden snares, than this; and when he cannot prevail with you upon doctrines, he will endeavour to discourage you from duties. For instance, are you desirous of attending the table of the Lord; he will endeavour to demonstrate, by every subtlety and fallacy in his power, that you are unfit, that if you go in your present state of mind, you will draw down a curse rather than a blessing; that you will “ eat and drink your own damnation, not considering the Lord’s body.” How many a humble contrite believer has been kept for years

in succession from this blessed means of grace, and this “most comfortable” ordinance, by such delusions as these. But here, again, from the Word of God, is your answer ; “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick ;” the very argument which Satan advances to keep you away from your Lord’s table, is urged by your Lord as a motive for going thither ; and may fairly be pleaded by yourself as a reason for his accepting you.

Again, Satan will discourage you from other duties by such considerations as these. He will tempt you to perform them in a cold, dead, heartless manner; for instance, while at prayer he will tempt you to vain thoughts, to impious thoughts, to profane and wicked thoughts; for he knows that a prayer which is not from the heart of the child will never reach the heart of the Father; and when he has succeeded in doing this, he will plead these very distractions, which were

occasioned by himself, as reasons why you should forego prayer and every holy duty; because to you they have thus become not only unprofitable, but even sinful and unholy.

So, again, with regard to the great duty of self-examination; no sooner do you endeavour to engage in earnest in this difficult work, than Satan is at your right hand to oppose you. He will first suggest that the inquiry is needless, that however it may be with the hypocrite, or the immoral, or the profane, there can be no doubt that your heart is right with God, and that to you it is unnecessary to examine yourselves “whether ye be in the faith.” If this will not succeed, he will endeavour the moment you have tried to fix your thoughts and attention steadily upon this one great object, to interrupt and distract them by every imagination foreign to the subject which he can introduce; until the time is spent, and you are obliged to confess, that

instead of services and self-examination, it has been consumed in little better than the most trifling idleness. If this device, however, should not succeed, but you are enabled to persevere steadfastly in your intended occupation, and are resolved to ascertain the true state of your affections and heart, and the true value of your religious duties, then Satan will even help you to see their worthlessness and wretchedness, if he may but build upon it the temptation that after all you are yourself only a hypocrite; that you have increased your sin by your very prayers; that duties so full of coldness and carelessness are only adding to your account; until at length he brings you to so bewildered a state of mind that you know not whether you would not sin the less by actually abstaining from duties altogether. Many there are, even in the more advanced stages of the Christian life, who suffer from these devices, and some from still more palpable temptations

than these. Sometimes, even to the confirmed Christian, Satan will present the strongest suggestions of positive infidelity. There are moments when he will lead them to question the reality of every doctrine and every truth upon which their hearts are fixed for eternity. Even the very being of a God, the Divinity of the Saviour, the existence of a Divine Revelation, the improbability that one among ten thousand spheres should have called the eternal Son from the bosom of the Father to agonize and die for its redemption; each and all of these will at times be present to the mind even of the most established believer. In all such cases, prayer, humble, faithful prayer, is the child of God's best and only refuge. Thus, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Thus unite yourself still more closely to the God of all strength and all consolation, and he will "bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" and again anchor your soul upon the Rock of Ages, from

which, for a moment, the Prince of the power of the air may have driven you.

The next device which I shall notice is of a very different nature from these, and one from which we might have hoped that the children of God would in a great measure be free; and yet, alas! so deeply is sin imbedded in the heart, that I believe the experienced Christian will not accuse me of exaggeration even here.

The device to which I allude is this, that Satan sometimes tempts the people of God into sin, by suggesting to them the facility of returning again to God by repentance. This is a fearful and most dangerous fallacy. You are, perhaps, conscious that you are about to enter upon some forbidden path, to partake of some unholy gratification, to perform some doubtful act, and instead of starting back from it with abhorrence, and asking, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God," you are tempted to go forward by the very recollection of

God's former mercies and past forgive-
nesses; you reason within yourself, 'This
may possibly be wrong; but if it be, I
will repent and forsake it, as I have done
before, and I know I have an affectionate
Father, a merciful and tender High
Priest, who is not "extreme to mark
what is done amiss," and who will again
bestow upon me repentance and pardon.'
My Christian brethren, this is a most
fearful and desperate delusion; so fearful,
that, if you yield to it, it ought to make
you question the very fact of your conver-
sion and your adoption altogether. It is
sad to fall into sin blindly and incon-
siderately; it is worse, far worse, to sin
with a knowledge that you are sinning,
and against the convictions fastened upon
your consciences by the Spirit of God; but
to sin with the secret determination that,
when you are satisfied, you will return;
to sin because you know you have a God
who willeth not the death of a sinner,
but had "rather he should turn from his

wickedness and live;" this is guilt of such black ingratitude, that we should indeed tremble for the soul that contracted it. Beware, above all things, of such presumptuous guilt as this, lest you too late discover, that though the downward passage has been easy, the upward path is impracticable, and that there is no return, no place for repentance, though you seek it bitterly and with tears. Few but those who have experienced it can tell, how much more difficult is the return to God than the departure from him. The heart of man may not unaptly be compared to a spring lock, which any individual may close, but he who holds the key alone can open. Thus you may, indeed, easily turn from God of yourself; you may shut out God of yourself; but you cannot turn to him, you cannot open your heart to the admission of him, except by the aid of that Being of whom the Word of God has declared, "He hath the key of David, he openeth, and

no man shutteth ; he shutteth, and no man openeth." How strong, upon this subject, is the language of God himself; " It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." Be careful, then, how you suffer your great enemy to shut to the door, lest He who says, " Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," shall depart from you excluded and neglected, never to return until he comes in judgment.

The two next devices of Satan to which I shall advert are, spiritual pride, and spiritual confidence.

Spiritual pride is one of the most successful temptations with which Satan assails a new convert. We are not surprised, in worldly matters, that the newly rich should be proverbially proud of their wealth. So in spiritual graces, the man who possessed none yesterday, will

readily be tempted to vaunt himself of the little he possesses to-day. He who has newly put on Christ, is often as vain of the garments of salvation, as a child is of his new clothes ; and is not satisfied, unless all see and admire and talk of him. Young Christians, therefore, are usually the most forward in all companies to boast of their achievements, and their acquirements. It is not astonishing, therefore, that this device is often successful against them ; especially, when we bear in mind, that the new convert knows but little, and sees but little, either of the unsearchable riches of Christ, or of the hitherto unattained advances in spiritual things which lie before him. He is, therefore, no judge of the vast extent, the infinite dimensions of Divine grace, and is perfectly ignorant even of what his own necessities and temptations will require. He thinks, naturally, that the little he has is great, because he knows no more, and this pe-

culiarly lays him open to the temptation we are considering. Every little act of self-denial appears to him a wonderful effort, and every labour of love, a great achievement. Even the apostles themselves, in the early part of their Christian career, were not free from this, or we should never have heard St. Peter exclaiming, "Lord, we have left all and followed thee," or have been told that they had disputed among themselves by the way, who should be "the greatest."

One of the worst effects of this temptation is, that it does not stand alone, it usually begets self-confidence. You have, for instance, by Divine grace, overcome some trying temptation ; the Devil's device is to make you vain of your success, and the consequence is, that the next time the same or a similar temptation occurs, you are tempted to trust to your own power, and your own strength, and your own former experience, and the grace you have before received ; and

the invariable effect is, that you fall before the temptation.

Here, again, we may find an example even amongst the most loved disciples of our Lord, “Be ye able to drink of the cup which I drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ?” said Jesus to James and John ; the answer, strongly savouring of self-confidence, was, “ We are able :” yet we do not find that they were exceptions when “ all the disciples forsook him and fled.”

Learn, therefore, never to trust to anything in the hour of trial, but to the strength to be derived immediately from God. He would not have proclaimed himself a “ very present God in time of trouble,” if his immediate presence had not been indispensable at such times to the stability of his people. The largest degree of grace ever vouchsafed, will be insufficient to stand against the smallest device of Satan, if it induce you to trust

to what you are, or to what you have, instead of sending you to the ever-flowing fountain. Never are you so secure as when you lie the lowest; or so safe, as when you are content to go out of yourself for all you desire or need.

Lastly, this state of spiritual pride and self-confidence, is one which lays the believer especially open to all the devices of Satan connected with heresy and error. I do not mean to say that other Christians are never misled by these things, but unquestionably the young, the ardent, the spiritually-proud, self-confident Christian is infinitely more exposed to them; and such characters will, I believe, be found upon examination to have formed in all ages of the Church, and especially in the newly-revived errors now afloat among us, nine-tenths of those who have swelled their ranks. There is something so gratifying to our fallen nature in being more learned than those around us, in receiving truths which they cannot

comprehend, in partaking of discoveries which are not revealed to them ; that many, very many, even of God's own people, especially when their besetting sins are of the nature just alluded to, are for a time misled by errors which, in after years, they look back upon with shame and grief and penitence. To guard you against this device, I would particularly caution you not to trifle with error. Remember that when God's Word declares, that there shall be "certain who shall privily bring in damnable heresies," it distinctly establishes this solemn truth, of which people are too little aware, that error can damn as well as vice. It is not for us to say what errors are thus dangerous ; but neither is it for us to conceal a truth so little believed, so seldom acted upon, and yet so certain and so appalling.

Do not trifle with error, by which I mean, do not willingly read, or hear, or place yourself in contact with error. Pray to be "kept by the power of God" from

everything which shall injure your singleness of eye, and singleness of heart, and simplicity of view of Divine truth. These are peculiarly trying times for such characters as those to which I am now referring ; if you know yourselves, your own peculiar temptations, your own besetting sins, you will be most watchful against this device of the tempter, and will keep at a distance from everything which will tend to favour or to foster it. Remember that by the law of God, as delivered to Moses, the Nazarite who was forbidden to drink wine, was also forbidden to eat grapes. There was clearly no fear lest the grapes should intoxicate him, but there was much fear lest the taste of the harmless fruit might beget in him the love and desire for the forbidden and dangerous spirit. Do not, therefore, willingly trust yourself upon the remotest confines of error ; if you would avoid the danger, do not be misled by the specious device of the tempter, that you must read

the productions of those who differ that you may judge for yourself. No; thank God that you are not called to pass through this ordeal to enable you to judge for yourself. If we know what truth is, we know what error is, without studying error ; just as by knowing what harmony is we know what is discord, without having our ears set on edge to learn it. Thank God that you have his Word and his Spirit, and that they are all-sufficient to teach you to discern error, without wading through its mischievous and destructive volumes.

But the time warns me to conclude.

The subject we have now been considering would still be left in a very imperfect state, were we to conclude our remarks upon it thus. I shall therefore hope in the next discourse to bring before you some considerations which will naturally grow out of this important subject. In the meantime may we be led, by what we have already seen, to think far

more scripturally of the spiritual dangers to which we are exposed, that we may guard more circumspectly, and pray more earnestly for the abiding presence and aid of Him who has crushed the serpent's head, and who will by his Divine power and grace, enable you, the weakest and feeblest of his followers, to become more than conquerors through him that loveth you.

SERMON VIII.

THE DEVICES OF SATAN.

EPHESIANS VI. 11.

"THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE
WILES OF THE DEVIL."

It has been the object of the two last discourses to lay before you a few of the most common and most dangerous devices of our great spiritual enemy, in the hope, and with the prayer, that some minds may be enlightened, some hearts encouraged, some souls comforted, amid the trials and the dangers of the Christian life. My intention at present is to offer, by the help of God's good Spirit, such further suggestions upon this important

entered upon gradually from its lighter to its deeper shades of criminality and guilt. For even a Heathen writer has handed down to us the observation, that no man becomes in an instant deeply abandoned. But when sin comes immediately from the Devil, there are none of these gradations, and it is remarkable for its suddenness and abruptness. It rushes in at once upon the thoughts, and we are hurried away without time, or reflection, or consideration, into transgression. It is, perhaps, on this account that the devices of Satan are compared, in the passage of Scripture from which the text is taken, to "fiery darts," which can be cast in a moment, and carrying sudden destruction to the soul. Two other methods of determining this difficult point, are by the nature of the sins to which we are tempted, and the effect they have on our minds and on our hearts.

The nature of the sin. Some of the most horrible and dreadful sins that can

be conceived are referred in the Scriptures of truth to the direct agency of Satan ; profane and blasphemous thoughts of God, murder, and especially self-murder. To this sin, through the instrumentality of Job's wife, Satan tempted that holy patriarch ; to this sin the devil, in his own person, tempted the Saviour of the world, when, having placed him upon a pinnacle of the temple, he said, "Cast thyself down." To this, again, he tempted successfully the miserable Judas, for we are expressly told that Satan entered into him before he engaged in his last dreadful deed of blood. If the nature of the temptation is thus in some degree a proof of the source from which it flows, so also is its effect upon our own minds and hearts. For instance, suppose that the moment an evil suggestion arises in your soul, you feel an unspeakable degree of loathing and abhorrence ; this is a strong presumptive evidence that it is the work of an enemy from without ; the heart does

not usually feel such violent dislike and hatred for sins which it has itself engendered. This then is a favourable sign to the tempted believer, and one which, if followed up by fervent, faithful, persevering prayer, will usually be succeeded by victory over temptation and the tempter.

But enough has perhaps been said upon this portion of our subject. We proceed now to the consideration of some of the reasons for which our heavenly Father of his mercy and goodness permits many, nay, all his children during their pilgrimage state, to suffer from the wiles of the Devil.

How essential a portion of our subject is this, may be gathered from the fact, that we so often feel inclined to wonder, and even to murmur, that when once brought among the number of God's people, we do not experience more freedom from these attacks. 'If I were indeed a child of God, I should not be thus continually harassed and disturbed

by temptation,' is often the language of our hearts. 'I was told that religious ways were ways of pleasantness and peace, but I am incessantly suffering from both internal and external disquietudes.' This mistake arises from our not fully understanding the nature of the life to which we are called. When you become, not merely in name, but in heart and in soul, a Christian, you must remember that you become a soldier, not a conqueror; that you are called to "fight," and to "run," and to "wrestle," all these are terms which are applied to the Christian life, to enter upon a course of difficulty and trial, not upon a season of enjoyment and rest. The Christian life, compared with the happiest worldly life, is unquestionably pleasantness and peace; but compared with "the rest which remaineth for the people of God," it ever has been, and ever will be, full of disquietudes and trouble; or why should our Lord himself have told us

first to sit down and count the cost? You ought, therefore, to expect to meet with these spiritual assailants and spiritual difficulties; and the following are among the many reasons we might offer, for which our heavenly Father sees good that it should be so.

Temptation or trials are most effectual tests of our Christian graces. Thus the full extent of Abraham's faith would never have been known to the Church of God had it not been tried by God himself; and the reality and depth of Job's sincerity and patience would have been equally unknown had they not been subjected to the temptations of Satan. Our heavenly Father, therefore, permits you to be tempted, to bring out your Christian graces and your holy obedience into far more abundant fruit-bearing to the honour of his name, thus in the end working for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

While the temptations of Satan are

producing this good and valuable effect upon your Christian graces, they are often producing equally salutary effects upon the darker and more unholy portion of your Christian character. For instance; you are perhaps beginning to feel the risings of spiritual pride, for ever springing up out of the remains of natural corruption even in the renewed heart; then does God permit your spiritual enemy to tempt you, that so the very feeling of your liability to sins, which you, perhaps, with some degree of self-complacency, hoped you had for ever cast beneath your feet, may tend to humble you and lower you in your own opinion, to show you what is in your heart, and to destroy these first buddings of pride. It was thus that God permitted St. Paul to suffer from a thorn in the flesh, which he expressly says, "was a messenger of Satan to buffet him," not because he had actually become proud and self-sufficient, but lest he should be lifted up; lest he

should grow proud, through the abundance of the revelations which was vouchsafed him.

In this case, therefore, the temptation was permitted by God as a preventive to feelings which, if suffered to grow up, might have endangered the spiritual life and peace of the apostle.

There are yet other and minor motives from which it probably pleases our heavenly Father to subject us to the fiery trial of temptation. For instance, to enable us wisely to counsel and thoroughly to sympathize with those who are tempted. It was a frequent saying of the great Martin Luther, that "temptation, meditation, and prayer, can alone make a minister." He who has never been deeply tried and exercised in his own heart, will never be able to say with St. Paul, "We are not ignorant of Satan's devices," and therefore will never be able wisely and feelingly to counsel those who are in "danger through manifold temptations." It is

when we have often ourselves smarted from the fiery darts of the enemy, that we know best the method of his attacks, and the quarters from which they are to be expected, and that we can instrumentally assist the suffering and tempted believer so to hold up the shield of faith as effectually to quench these weapons of the evil one.

It is on this account also, that aged and experienced Christians are usually far more tolerant, and far more lenient and kind in their judgment of their sinning brethren, than the young and untempted believer. They best know the power of Satan and the weakness of their own hearts ; they best know that if they have stood where others have fallen, the strength and the courage and the merit are not their own ; and therefore while they say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the praise," they can truly and feelingly sympathize with every fellow-Christian who is suffer-

ing from those devices which they have, through the undeserved mercy of their Redeemer, overcome or escaped.

But, probably, above all other reasons, the Almighty permits us to be thus tried and tempted that we may not fix ourselves too strongly and root ourselves too firmly here below, but may, in the midst both of worldly and spiritual prosperity, know something experimentally of the Psalmist's feeling, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." Blessed is that trial, be it what it may, if it in any degree strengthen this desire, so wholly unknown to the ungodly, to be for ever with the Lord, and to behold his glory.

Without dwelling at greater length upon the reasons for which a merciful God frequently permits even his dearest children to be exposed for a time to the devices of the wicked one, enough has I trust been said to demonstrate, for this is my chief object, that it is perfectly

compatible with the wisdom and power, and even with the love and mercy of God, that such things are permitted; and I shall therefore proceed to consider some of those assistances and supports which God in mercy bestows upon his tempted children, that they may be able to "stand against the wiles of the Devil."

The first of these is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

This is the only offensive weapon which you can successfully use against our powerful adversary. Even the Lord Jesus Christ condescended to wield this weapon. When Satan tempted him, he replied to every one of the three temptations by a quotation from the written Word, probably to encourage us by the thought that even the eternal Son of the Father, with all the infinity of weapons in heaven's own armoury at his command, chose to select his arrows from the same quiver which is open to you and to

myself, to the very weakest and the most helpless of his followers.

When Satan therefore approaches, go to the quiver of God's Word, and draw your arrows thence, and Satan shall as certainly fly from you as he fled from the sword of your Leader.

But, brethren, before you can do this, it is not enough that the Bible is in your houses, it must often be in your hands, and its truths treasured up in your memories, and in your hearts. It is because men know so little of God's Word, that they are so utterly helpless under temptation. Were you in the habit of daily attentive reading, and searching that Word of God, it would be impossible, with all his cunning and all his resources, for the Devil to bring any single temptation, from the grossest and most insulting, to the highest and most refined, for which you would not be able immediately to find an appropriate and

successful reply. Let us take some common instances: were he to tempt you to theft, or to drunkenness, or to covetousness, you might say in reply, "It is written," "Be not deceived: neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Were he to tempt you to gross licentiousness, "It is written," "Whoremongers and adulterers God shall judge." To Sabbath-breaking, "It is written," "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." To fear man rather than God, "It is written," "Fear not them which can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Were he to tempt you to doubt of your Lord's power or willingness to save your soul from hell, "It is written," "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" and again, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Thus in the treasury of God's Word, you will find "It is written," an answer, and an effectual one, to every temptation

which Satan can present. It is the only certain method of resisting this powerful enemy; the method which your Lord himself adopted, and which your heavenly Father has from the beginning most abundantly blessed.

As the written Word is the one great offensive weapon, so is constant, faithful, fervent prayer, the one great defensive weapon, in resisting “the wiles and devices of the devil.”

When you feel a temptation injected into your thoughts, or your affections, betake yourself at once, to secret, silent, prayer. You cannot be in any company, in which a Christian ought to be, you cannot be engaged in any occupation in which a Christian ought to engage, or be partaking of any amusement of which a Christian ought to partake, which would render the aid of silent, ejaculatory prayer, misplaced, or impossible. By this you may, in a moment, remove yourself from the neighbourhood of the tempter,

to the footstool of a throne of grace. By this you may hide yourself, as it were, under the very wings of Omnipotence, through which no weapons of Satan's armoury, no dart from Satan's bow, can ever penetrate. The tempted believer, taking refuge, by faithful heartfelt prayer beneath the shadow of the everlasting wings, is, as regards the wiles of Satan, as secure, as Noah was, while in the ark of God's love, from all the storms and tempests of the flood which drowned the world. For it is this which realizes your union with your Lord, and, by close and intimate communion, brings you at once to him, who, while Satan is engaged in tempting you, is himself engaged in praying for you; yes, in unceasing intercession, that though "Satan has desired to have you, your faith fail not;" and therefore like his of old, it shall not fail, but "shall be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

In conclusion, I would offer a few words of encouragement to you who “suffer, being tempted.”

There are, we believe, few, if any, of the real people of God who do not suffer from the wiles and devices of Satan, and this to a far greater degree than the people of the world. Of those who are living without God, we have the authority of God’s own Word for saying, at least as a general rule, that “they come in no misfortune like other folk,” they are exempt from many of the most trying mental exercises of which the mind of man is susceptible. They are, as the same Word assures us, already in “the snare of the Devil, taken captive by him at his will;” and therefore his end is gained, he has no need of wiles and devices to effect what is already effected; his only effort with regard to them, is to lull and to soothe and to satisfy and to keep them, that they may neither perceive their thraldom, nor feel their

chains, until the iron has entered into their soul, and is for ever rivetted in the fires of eternity. But with you, who are really endeavouring to follow Christ, the case, thank God, is widely different, and Satan knows and feels it to be so. He knows that an all-powerful Saviour has engaged for your protection and salvation; that however he may rage and foam and struggle, he is himself as completely in the Saviour's power, as you are, and that the time is short in which he will be permitted to disturb and harass the people of God, before he is consigned to "the blackness of darkness for ever." Therefore, are his efforts great and terrible and unceasing, but the very cause from which they spring, ought to form one of your strongest grounds of encouragement.

You have the assurance of your God, that Satan can do nothing without his permission. If not a "sparrow fall to the ground without your Father," then

most certainly shall not his children stumble or fall without his providential permission. While you seek him, he has declared that "your footsteps shall not slide." While you serve him, his Word is pledged to you, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Whatever, therefore, be the efforts of Satan against the welfare of your soul, you are secure of these two most blessed facts; that your God, who has pledged himself not to "suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but with the temptation to make a way to escape," is aware of your trial, and that he is present during your trial; what more can you desire or need?

It is true that you may not feel sensible of these most comforting truths at the moment you need them most, but then you must not blame God for this, you must say with David, "this is mine infirmity;" they are equally the immutable truths of God, and if you forget them, or

derive no consolation from them, it neither alters their truth nor their stability, for the “foundation of the Lord standeth” equally “sure,” and his promises shall not fail. You may, indeed, “lose sight of him by the way,” this depends upon yourself; but you shall assuredly find him at the journey’s end, for that depends upon God, whose covenant is an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure. Therefore, brethren, “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand, in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Let every tried and tempted soul among us throw aside all other dependencies, and rest calmly and contentedly upon these two, the strongest and the best, God’s promises and God’s omnipotence, pledged as they are to us, through Jesus Christ, for every hour of trial or of suffering. In this blessed and com-

forting and soul-satisfying assurance we shall obtain fresh grace, fresh strength, fresh resolution, to “run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith ;” who has not only placed his own foot upon that serpent’s head, but will, in his good time, place there in triumph the foot of the weakest and the tenderest of his redeemed and purchased people ; to him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for ever and ever.

SERMON IX.

THE SOLEMN SEARCH.

ZEPHANIAH I. 12.

"AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS AT THAT TIME, THAT I WILL SEARCH JERUSALEM WITH CANDLES, AND PUNISH THE MEN THAT ARE SETTLED ON THEIR LEES: THAT SAY IN THEIR HEART, THE LORD WILL NOT DO GOOD, NEITHER WILL HE DO EVIL."

IN every congregation, there are many different classes of hearers; among them, perhaps, one of the most important, and most prominent, is that to which such remarkable allusion is made in the words I have just read to you. Men who have become accustomed to the sound of the Gospel; men to whom its threatenings and its promises are so well known, that

its threatenings excite little apprehension, and its promises, little delight; men upon whose ear the strongest appeals to their consciences, the most blessed invitations of a Saviour's love, fall unheeded; men who live in a state of quiet without safety, of repose without security, and of peace without one well-grounded hope of peace. Their state has been described in several passages of Holy Writ, under the very expressive metaphor of "settling on their lees," or on their dregs; a simile very natural from the lips of those who lived in a land of vineyards, and to whom the sight of casks of the wine of their country, which had remained unmoved and unagitated for years together, must have been of daily occurrence.

We find, therefore, the Prophet Jeremiah, adopting it in one of the most striking of his predictions, when he says, "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees,

and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath been into captivity; therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his heart is not changed. Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels and break their bottles."

There appears, indeed, to be no state of mind which the Almighty views with more displeasure, and which he exerts himself, if we may so say, more constantly to overcome or to punish, than this cold, dead, phlegmatic state of the affections and the heart, which God himself has denominated a "settling on our lees." Against this it is, that the warning of the text is most peculiarly pointed, and against this it is, that I feel called by the present season more especially to exhort and to warn and to counsel you this day.

May the Spirit of God make his own

Word “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, as a dis- cerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

The first portion of the text describes, under a very familiar figure, the exceeding carefulness and accuracy with which the Almighty will carry on his search after these men of whom we have been speaking, “I will search Jerusalem with candles.” Intending to imply, ‘No house, however obscure, throughout the whole city, no recess or closet in that house capable of containing one of these delin- quents for whom I look, shall escape my search. For if the light of day be insuffi- cient, I will bring even lamps and torches to the search, rather than omit a single individual who is thus slighting and dishonouring me.’ It is not impro- bable that the expression is here used by God to meet the infidelity and the atheism

of those who, according to this same prophet, exclaimed, “The Lord sees not, neither doth he regard.” Why doth he not? because he wants light? ‘Well, then,’ says God, ‘I will supply the deficiency; I will search Jerusalem with candles, and you shall learn whether I can neither see nor regard.’

The second portion of the text marks out, with a peculiar degree of distinctness, the character and the fate of those for whom this search was undertaken. “I will punish the men who are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.”

It appears at first sight strange to us, that if God be about to utter warnings, and to foretel punishments upon Jerusalem, this should be the class of persons whom he should especially visit; that if about to institute so accurate a search, these should be the only persons mentioned.

The reason, brethren, is this,—the open sinner, the thief, the adulterer, the drunkard, the murderer, is known and read of all men; there is no need of fresh warnings of condemnation upon him, and no necessity for candles to search him out; the very strictness of the search marks not only the determination of God to discover all for whom he seeks, but at the same time that he is looking for delinquents whose crimes are not written upon their foreheads, and their characters blazoned forth as the noonday. Now this is precisely the case at all times, and in all places, with the class of persons of whom we speak. There may be nothing in the outward life and conversation of any individual among us this day, which shall distinctly pronounce this man to be “settled down upon his lees,” to be living in an unholy and false security; and yet who will venture to assert that there may not be many among us at this moment, who, in the sight of

God, are precisely the characters described, and warned, and threatened, in the text.

May the Lord reveal these persons to themselves, and shew them the difference between the true and settled peace of the children of God, and the false and destructive peace of those who are dwelling in this ruinous security.

To aid in this important work shall be my first endeavour, and to advise and counsel those who may stand self-convicted, shall be my second endeavour this morning.

The first class of persons, which falls the most obviously and undeniably under the description of the text, is formed of those, if such there are, who live in that state of practical forgetfulness of God, so significantly expressed by those who say in their heart, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." Who have no care whatever for the God who made, and the Saviour who redeemed them; who scarcely

ever bestow a thought upon him. Yet these are not the avowed enemies of God ; they do not profane his name as the common swearer does ; nor deny it as the Atheist does ; nor dishonour it in their daily conversation as the loose or profane talker does. No ; the text says expressly, "They say in their hearts," and probably never hint at it with their lips ; but their heart is full of practical infidelity, they believe that neither good nor evil comes from God ; they attribute it to chance, fortune, accident, anything but God, to whom they would be ashamed to refer it. The truth is, that God is not in all their thoughts ; they do not openly array themselves against him, they content themselves with utterly forgetting him. Against these, and such as these, although they may pass well in society, as honest and honourable, and amiable and upright, God has denounced his vengeance when he said, "The wicked shall

be turned into hell, and all the people who forget God." Yes, uncharitable as man might esteem it in his fellow-man, God himself has declared that he will know no difference on the great day of account, between the man who openly sins against God, and the man who contents himself with forgetting him.

Are there any among you to whom this distinguishing mark is not experimentally unknown? Who, when you rise in the morning, begin the day by forgetting God? When you go forth to your daily avocations, seek not his blessing? When you return to your comforts and your pleasures, acknowledge not his hand? When you retire to rest, close the day with the same forgetfulness of God with which you opened it? You will at least need no tongue to tell you that you have altogether "settled upon your lees," and are in a peculiar manner the objects of the threatening of the text. Your efforts are all for the world; its business or its

pleasures occupy your every thought and desire and feeling. You, then, have need to tremble at the warning of the text, for the God who dictated it speaks expressly to yourselves, and says, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment."

But yet again, and another class presents itself; you who have not profited by the chastenings and the judgments of God upon others, or upon yourselves during the last twelvemonth. There is no stronger mark than this of a soul sunk in carnal and deadly security. What do we think of the thief who robs even beneath the gallows? What does God think of that man who, when God's judgments have been around him, and perhaps even entered his own house, and struck down his worldly prosperity, or blighted his

affections, or disappointed his hopes, is still the same unthinking, careless, God-forgetting being that he ever was? Alas! how many among us will this convict? How many, for instance, who, when the fears of the approaching pestilence* had driven them to their knees, no sooner found it had pleased a merciful Father so to temper it in our visitation that it bore little resemblance to the pest which had depopulated less favoured regions, than they at once settled down again, and from that hour to the present, perhaps, have hardly felt a single earnest hearty desire for near communion with God, or devotedness to his will and to his ways. How many more who, while the chastening hand of God was upon themselves, or those they love, became at once among the most humble of his followers, but no sooner felt it was withdrawn than they sunk into the same security from which

* The cholera in 1833.

they had been so forcibly drawn and so painfully aroused.

Brethren, there is nothing so provoking to a God who chastens only that he may awaken and save, as this neglect of judgments. If he beholds in any one instance among you such conduct, be assured that if he have purposes of mercy for that soul, he will increase his judgments, and repeat his visitations, and multiply his chastenings, until he pour you out from off your dregs, whereon you are settled, and empty you from vessel to vessel, and leave untouched none,—no, not one of those things on which your hearts have dwelt and your souls are fixing. It is God's invariable method ! It is inscribed, though we see it not, upon half the tombstones which fill our burying-grounds ; it is written in every page of God's revealed Word. Listen only to the fourth chapter of the Prophet Amos, where you find this method of God's dealing detailed at con-

siderable length. “I have given you cleanliness of teeth (or famine) in all your cities; yet ye have not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” What comes next? “I have smitten you with blasting and mildew; yet ye have not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” What then? “I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” What further? “I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.” And how does all this conclude? “Therefore thus will I do unto thee: Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.” Wave follows wave in thick and rapid succession, judgment follows judgment, yet all without avail; they were as deaf to the voice of vengeance as they have long been to the voice of mercy, so “settled on their lees” that nothing can shake them: then does

God draw the remaining arrow from his quiver, and verify the words of the Psalmist, "Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of thine enemies," by calling them to immediate and inevitable judgment.

But we have still another class to whom to address a word of warning and of exhortation.

You who neglect to benefit by ordinances, and though the Word of God be in your ears, do not hear it,—that is, do not cherish it in your hearts and practise it in your lives,—listen to the manner in which God has described conduct precisely such as this by the mouth of his Prophet Zechariah, "They made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent; therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts." And the manner in which this wrath was manifested is told us in the following verse: "Therefore it is come to

pass, that as he cried and they would not hear; so they cried and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts."

The hearing, of the want of which the Lord here accuses his people, is not the mere hearing of the ear, but the hearing of the heart. "They made their hearts as adamant, that they should not hear." Brethren, are you all free from this sign of carnal security? Perhaps there never was a time when more outward attention to the Word of God was manifested, than during the past twelvemonth; but has there been the hearing heart? has the Word, whether read or preached, or expounded, brought forth fruit? Is there a deeper and stronger conviction of sin? Is there less of worldliness and vanity and folly? "What do ye more than others?" was our Lord's inquiry of his own disciples, and is, at the present moment, of ourselves. It is vain to say, We hear more; we attend ordinances more; or even we know more. In the

passage that I have read to you, you will observe, that it was the state of the heart of which God complained, and by which alone he calculates the value of the hearing ear, or the talking tongue. Is your heart penetrated with a holy abhorrence of sin, of all sin, even your most favourite, and is it filled with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ ? Is there more of the practical influence of God's truth in your lives ? More real, heartfelt, respect to his hallowed day, and his revealed will ; more of its amiable and blessed features in your tempers ? More of charity, more of humility, more of sincerity ? " By their fruits ye shall know them," saith the Lord. If not, although you never may have omitted a single opportunity when this house of prayer has been opened, or the Lord's table has been spread, you may yet be unmoved upon the dregs, and therefore yet among the number of those of whom the Lord has said, " These will I punish." Still

one other class must be briefly alluded to. You who are really born again of the Spirit, who have well-grounded hopes of your pardon and acceptance, who look to Christ for a free and full salvation, and have settled down, I will not say, into an Antinomian state of lethargy, but still into far too near an approach to it; who have lost your first love, and your first zeal, and your first earnestness, and have grown remiss in secret duties, and slothful in your more public duties, and feeling a fancied security as to the safety of your own souls, take far too little thought for the souls of those around you, and make far too few, or shrink altogether from, self-denying exertions for the comfort and happiness and welfare of those with whom you live. Perhaps you scarcely know yourselves under this description. The Lord enlighten and awaken, that he may not be compelled also to trouble and to punish you.

But it is time that I should offer a few

hints, though they must be brief, by which we may all awaken from a state of false and dangerous security. And in these I especially address myself to you who are not theoretically ignorant of the great truths of the Gospel ; but who know, and who hold them in a cold, dull, inoperative, and uninfluential manner.

If you would be free then from this spiritual drowsiness, keep yourself in spiritual exercise. We have all heard of cases when a man must be roused, and shaken, and walked about, to keep him from a sleep, from which he would no more awaken, and from which nothing but the constant motion of the body preserves him. So it is with you. Nothing will, under God's grace, tend so much to rouse you from the state we have been describing, as constant spiritual exercise. Be frequent then, especially in secret religious duties, in prayer, reading, meditation, self-examination, and converse ; but do not confine yourselves to

them ; you must exercise more publicly your Christian graces, as well as perform these private and necessary duties. Exercise your faith in difficulties, your meekness under provocation, your patience in affliction, your charity and kindness in relieving the wants, or adding to the comfort and happiness of those around you. If these opportunities do not readily occur, seek for them. Be always doing something, however small, for the honour and glory of God. Work for the poor, visit the poor, minister to the poor ; teach in our schools, assist missionary societies, unite your exertions for the better observance of the Lord's-day ? do something, do anything, if your time and circumstances will allow, rather than be spiritually idle. It is only by constant activity, that you can keep your souls awake. For all have found, and you will assuredly find, that whenever you give up spiritual exercises you will

fall into carnal security of some kind or other.

Again, as another remedy for this spiritual drowsiness, this “settling upon the lees,” keep God always in your sight, live much with Jesus, have close communion with the Holy Ghost. Even the most heedless child pays some attention when he is beside his father; even the worst servant, who yields but an eye-service, does not sleep while the master’s eye is upon him. Realize more, then, of the presence of God, every hour of every day; see him in your chamber, in your office, in your shop, in your rides, in your walks, in society, in the church; never leave his side, never forget that he is close at hand, seeing, hearing, knowing everything. While conscious of the nearness of such a witness, you will up and be doing, and like the apostle, whatever you do, even to eating and drinking, you will “do all to the glory of God.”

Lastly, to guard against this dangerous security, look often at the lapse of time, the nearness of death, the certainty of approaching judgment. If anything will prevent you from settling on your lees, if anything will rouse you from your slumbers, by God's help this will do so.

Think you that there is one here present, who, if he heard at this hour the awful summons, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," would close his eyes one moment in sleep before that summons was fulfilled ? There would be no slumber, no lethargy, no drowsiness there ! How would he watch each hour of the departing day ! With what feelings would he behold, for the last time, the sun sinking down into the west ! How attentively would he listen as each hour of darkness passed away, and how zealously would he pray, how carefully would he converse, or how silently and thoughtfully would he meditate while the last few hours of life were running out !

Where would vanity, worldliness, covetousness, folly, be at such a time? What would the world and all its possessions be worth at such a season? Not one hour's purchase. And who will dare venture to say that they are certainly worth more to him to-day? Who, when he looks around upon this congregation, and feels the positive certainty, that ere this season again returns, some, nay many, will have heard and obeyed that solemn summons; who can retire from this house to dream away the coming twelvemonth, as he has dreamt away the last? Surely it is the worst of madness not to be aroused and to bestir ourselves when death and judgment, heaven and hell, are at the door. May the Spirit of God make us all more in earnest than we have ever been in the great work which lies before us. Religion must be everything, or it is nothing. Therefore, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in

the grave, whither thou art hastening." Were you ever, or are you now, conscious that you have sins to be given up, unholy practices to be discontinued, ungodly company or pleasures to be forsaken,—do it at once, do it to-day. You have long enough experienced the folly and the falsehood of doing it to-morrow, therefore do it to-day. Leave not this house of prayer until you have solemnly, earnestly, and from your inmost soul, besought God to give you both the will and the power, to strengthen the holy resolution which you now find rising in your mind, and to carry it out into full and permanent effect. O, it is fearful to think that there should be one soul among us, lost to all eternity, by neglecting the counsel of God, and by settling down again upon the dregs of carelessness, formality, selfishness, and sin !

Let us pray.

Stir up we beseech thee, O Lord, the hearts and wills of thy people, that while

many are sleeping around us the deep sleep of death, we may have grace to devote ourselves, our souls and bodies, to thy holy and happy service ; that we may follow the Lord fully, without hesitation and without reserve, thinking nothing too dear to sacrifice at thy bidding, and nothing too hard to undertake at thy command ; that when thou comest we may be among the blessed number of those who are waiting and watching, with their loins girt and their lamps burning, to go in with thee and for ever be partakers at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

SERMON X.

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

JEREMIAH XXIII. 6.

" THIS IS THE NAME BY WHICH HE SHALL BE CALLED,
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Of all the blessed titles of the Redeemer, most blessed, most consolatory, most delightful to the heart of every true child of God, is this, "The Lord our Righteousness;" conveying, as it does, to the believer, in the very name by which his Lord and his Redeemer was announced, his own undoubted charter to an inheritance beyond the skies. But even while we record this great and blessed truth, it is impossible not to fear that there may

be some, and some who bear the name of Christian, to whom this glorious appellation conveys no such distinct and definite impression. Some who hear it as a mere distinctive title, as they would hear the Saviour called, "The Root and Offspring of Jesse," or "The bright and morning Star," or by any other of those names of glory, with which the Word of God delights to designate the Saviour of the world.

It shall be our object, then, to endeavour to give such a simple exposition of this, the highest and the best of all those terms of honour with which the name of Jesus has been crowned, that no individual may leave this house to-day unable—would to God that we might hope that no individual should leave it unwilling—to realize all the meaning and all the comfort of the name, and to exclaim, with a deep and grateful sense of self-appropriation, "The Lord *my* Righteousness."

The great and blessed doctrine, then, which we conceive to be proclaimed to the Church of God by the words before us, is this; that when the promised Redeemer should come, who is plainly predicted in the verse which precedes the text, he should, as the prophet Daniel expresses it, "make an end of sins, and make a reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness." It is with the last clause of this verse more particularly that we have now to do. Jesus was to be called "The Lord our Righteousness," because by the perfect obedience of his life, by the entire submission of his death, by the infinite value of his ransom, he wrought out and brought in such a perfect and everlasting righteousness, as man could not even conceive, as angels and archangels could not emulate, and as God himself could not refuse.

Now, brethren,—and I address you as those who have joined this morning not in word only, but in heart and in soul, in

the scriptural services of our Church; and when you prayed, "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," felt convinced that you had many sins which had need of pardon, and many painful short-comings, even in your purest actions and in your holiest duties, both to God and to your neighbours; and I would ask you if the choice were your own, freely offered you at this moment by our heavenly Father, of all that would, according to your own ideas of your own sinfulness and infirmity, most forward the spiritual welfare of your souls, what would you require ? Feeling, as we have supposed you do, your own utter incapacity to escape from the condemning power of the law ; feeling that it ever has and ever must convict you of sin, even when desiring and striving and praying and labouring to be most righteous before God ; what should you desire in a Saviour, if God were to give you your own choice, and put into your hands a blank to fill it up in that manner which, according to

your finite comprehension, would make the way of salvation the plainest, and the road to heaven the easiest, and a perfect righteousness the most accessible, to such poor, sinful creatures as ourselves ? I conceive that the reply of every one who is in earnest in this great matter; of every one who has ever striven and stumbled, and again, by God's grace, risen and striven, and then by his own waywardness and infirmity stumbled and fallen again ; would be something of a nature similar to this ; It is much to have a perfect model set before me ; but then, alas ! I cannot imitate it ; it is still more to have guiding and strengthening grace so freely offered me, and how unspeakably do I value it ; but still, when I have done all, I am but an unprofitable servant, and how can I be fit to appear before a perfect God ? Would, therefore, that there might be such an infinite perfection, such an infinite supply of righteousness treasured up in Christ Jesus, that there should be enough for

all, enough for me ; that when I stand before the bar of God, and feel overwhelmed with the consciousness of my past transgressions, and upon looking at my righteousness, see even the best of them to be as an unclean thing, as a polluted garment, I might be enabled to look at him who stands at God's right hand, and claim his righteousness as mine own, and plead his merits for mine, and be allowed his obedience to stand for mine ; and that all the wonderful perfections of his life, all the matchless merits of his death, might be as much my own as if I had walked in perfectness from my cradle to my grave, and had been one, in whose every most secret thought and word and feeling and action, a God of perfect purity, had been " well-pleased."

What would be the feeling with which you would hear in reply, from the lips of the living God, if as a true and humble penitent you have closed with the offers of the Saviour, and fled to his great

atonement for acceptance, ‘Son, it is done as thou hast said. The Saviour whom I have sent is called, or appointed to be “the Lord thy righteousness;” not only all that thou hast ever owed, has he abundantly and fully paid; not only all thy sins have been once and for ever laid on him, but all his righteousness is once and for ever laid on thee; henceforth, throughout eternity thou art to me as one clad in those garments of righteousness and salvation which belong to the only-begotten Son.’ Can we conceive anything more blissful to the soul of the poor trembling, yet deeply penitent, and believing sinner, than an assurance such as this. Pardon and grace and strength and perseverance are indeed most blessed boons, but here is one which outweighs them all, which restores to the human soul that image of God which Adam defaced and ruined, and which clothes it in a righteousness infinitely more perfect, infinitely more valuable in the sight of

God, than Adam's could have ever been, had he remained to this hour the spotless tenant of his earthly paradise.

But delightful as is the belief that such are really the promises of God with reference to this great subject, there are some, perhaps, who would most willingly and gratefully apply them to themselves, if only they could believe that they were indeed contained in God's own Word, and not a mere portion of the divinity system of some human teacher.

I shall proceed then to demonstrate what I have now asserted, that you may examine the Word of God for yourselves, and see whether these things be so.

In doing this, I shall pass by the strikingly corroborative declarations of the prophet, "in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" and of the apostle, the righteousness of God, is "unto all, and upon all them that believe," with many similar, confining myself to the application of a single

passage; for if the mouth of him who cannot lie hath spoken it, it will be as convincing to his people, and as certain and unquestionable to their hearts, if it be but in a single word, as if it were blazoned upon every page and written in every chapter of the Bible.

The passage then which I should select as one among the many foundation-stones of this great doctrine, is at the close of the fifth chapter of Romans, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

The apostle here distinctly draws the parallel between the disobedience of the first Adam and the obedience of the second; and he says, “As” by the first, many have been made sinners, “So,” or in the same manner, by the second, “shall many be made righteous.” It is evident, then, that there is no force whatever in the assertion of the apostle, unless the method by which the righteousness of

Christ is said to make us righteous, be precisely analogous to the method by which the sin of Adam is said to make us sinners. Now no true Christian, however he may feel upon the point immediately before us, will hesitate for a moment as to the scriptural view of the effects of Adam's sin. No true Christian denies that all mankind fell when Adam fell; that as our federal head, what he did, we are considered to have done; and that in consequence, as God's Word repeatedly declares, we come into the world with a load of unpardoned guilt upon ourselves. Born in sin, for in sin did our mothers conceive us, the most innocent infant in the world, until cleansed by the application of the blood of Christ, is a child of wrath, even as others. This was the manner, then, in which, by the disobedience of one, all have been made sinners; not by a mere following the example of Adam, as the Pelagians do vainly talk, and as our Ninth

Article expressly contradicts, but by the inherent taint of a corrupt and fallen nature, stamped with the deadly impress of its great progenitor's primeval sin.

This, then, is the manner also in which many, nay every child of God, is made righteous. The moment you are born into the family of earth, the sin of Adam is laid upon you, and cleaves to you, and becomes your sin; the moment you are born into the family of God, the righteousness of Christ is laid upon you, and remains upon you, and becomes your righteousness. From that hour you are, as the apostle expresses it, "complete in Christ," and being so complete, you plead, with reverence and deep humility be it spoken, you plead your acceptance at the hands of God's justice, according to the terms of the covenant with the Eternal Son; and that covenant having been published, God is, as St. John declares, "Righteous and just to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unright-

eousness." For it is thus and thus only that the words of the Holy Ghost can be fulfilled, that, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." It is thus that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" and that it pleases God to admit, and to reward, as if it were the personal righteousness of every one of his believing people, this perfect obedience of the Incarnate Son. In the day, then, that by the act of sovereign grace you close with the offers of your Redeemer, he becomes "the Lord your righteousness:" in his "obedience even unto death," *i. e.*, from the cradle to the cross, you are by God's mercy clothed; a wedding garment, well worthy of that wedding feast to which he has purchased your admittance. Arrayed in this, the poorest, weakest, most ignorant sinner among ourselves shall not be ashamed, when invited to sit down with Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob, and all the saints of God, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. For the highest and most glorious guest in that assembly shall have no better, I may say, shall have no other garment than yourself. "We overcame by the blood of the Lamb," shall be the only watch-word which shall enable you to pass through the gate of the heavenly citadel; "We are clothed in the righteousness of the Lamb," the only declaration which shall admit you to the table of the heavenly banquet.

Brethren, I trust I do not state this great and glorious truth in language stronger than Scripture warrants, or than the true people of God, in every age, have adopted. Hear only the words of that great luminary of our Church, the judicious Hooker, "The righteousness wherein we must be found," he says, "if we will be justified, is not our own; therefore we cannot be justified by any inherent quality. * * * Although,

then, in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man who is impious in himself, full of iniquity, full of sin, him being found in Christ, through faith, * * * him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it, taketh away the punishment due thereto by pardoning it, and accepteth him in Christ Jesus, as perfectly righteous as if he had fulfilled all that was commanded of him in the law—shall I say, more perfectly righteous than if himself had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say; but the apostle saith, ‘God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’ Such we are in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself. Let it be counted folly, or phrenzy, or fury, or whatsoever, it is our comfort and our wisdom; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered, that God hath

made himself the Son of Man, and that men are made the righteousness of God." Surely, then, we may well add in the glowing language of a dignitary of our Church of a former day, "Had I all the faith of the patriarchs, all the zeal of the prophets, all the good works of the apostles, all the sufferings of the martyrs, I would renounce the whole, in point of dependance, and glory only in the atoning blood, and justifying righteousness of Jesus Christ, my Lord."

In conclusion, brethren, the practical inquiry which arises out of this high subject, is simply the question which each man's heart alone can answer. "Is the Saviour of whom I have this day heard, the Lord my Righteousness?" Do you ask, how is this to be determined? What is the act of faith which is to make him mine? We reply, the first great point is that to which we have already referred, the deep heartfelt uncompromising conviction and abhorrence

and renunciation of sin. This once wrought in you by that Holy Spirit, whose alone prerogative it is to convince the world of sin, and we advance one step farther,—we come to the act of justifying faith, for which you inquire; that of which all Scripture, all experience, all living believers, all dying saints, all blessed martyrs, all pardoned sinners tell. Now this act is not comprised in a single thought, a single desire, a single word, but it consists in a state of mind, of affections, of heart. That state which the Holy Spirit alone can work, and which, where his Divine influences are sincerely sought, he will work in any fallen, corrupt, polluted child of fallen Adam; that state which enables you to leave all for Christ, to seek all from Christ, and to find all, and more than all, in Christ.

Brethren, is this your state at the present moment? Can you say, from your heart, There is no sin, no pleasure,

no profit, no feeling which I would not willingly sacrifice, and desire to sacrifice, for Christ's sake, if God require it? There is no act, no thought, no word, no righteousness of mine, with which, in the way of merit, I would desire to approach God; "my best is nothing worth," all are vile, all are polluted, all are deserving rather of punishment for their shortcoming, than of reward for their merits. I, therefore, give up all, I renounce all, I abhor all, if put in competition with what my Saviour and Redeemer has done and suffered for me; to that and to that alone I look; my only hope, my only solace, my only and all-sufficient Saviour, is Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages.

Then, brethren, this, as regards each individual among you, so thinking and so acting, is the name whereby God at this moment calls the Divine the Eternal Son, "the Lord your Righteousness." This is that justifying faith which

makes you one with God, and God with you; this is that state of heart and affections, which all preaching, all reading, all meditation, all sacraments, all prayer, are intended instrumentally to produce, or to build up, or to establish. We ask nothing more for you and for ourselves, than that this may be, not a momentary impulse strongly affecting the mind, not like a cloud across the sun, changing its appearance for a moment, and then passing away for ever, but the abiding, settled, habitual, posture of our affections and thoughts; enabling us to say, not once, but for ever, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me,"—"not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

With these feelings, to you "to live will be Christ, and to die will be gain,"

your life will be holy, your death peaceful, your end glorious. He whom you have loved and worshipped and obeyed, will be "the Lord your Righteousness" now, the Lord your everlasting joy, and your infinite happiness, in the kingdom of his Father.

SERMON XI.

CONFESSING CHRIST.

MATTHEW X. 32, 33.

"WHOSOEVER SHALL CONFESS ME BEFORE MEN, HIM WILL I CONFESS ALSO BEFORE MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN. BUT WHOSOEVER SHALL DENY ME BEFORE MEN, HIM WILL I ALSO DENY BEFORE MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN."

THERE is something peculiarly great and ennobling in true Christianity. It refines the feelings, elevates the heart, dignifies the manners, while it converts and saves the soul. So strikingly is this the case, that it is a common observation of those who have enjoyed the largest intercourse with the religious poor, that they could in almost all cases rightly pronounce, merely from externals, whether the inmates of a

cottage have been really brought into the household and family of Christ Jesus our Lord. No doubt the first great cause of this is, that the moment the heart comes under the influence of Divine grace, it is opened to the action of a multitude of thoughts and impressions of a far higher nature than have ever yet been brought to bear upon it ; and while exercised in these, it necessarily escapes from much of the dross and dust and pollution of that lower world in which it has been, hitherto, wholly occupied ; it becomes conversant with subjects as entirely above the comprehension of the highest created intelligence, as they are above its own ; it lives much in the contemplation of the eternal ; it unites daily, not only with the wisest and noblest and best of men in their thoughts and prayers and meditations, but it goes higher still ; it has one subject and one feeling and one song with angels and archangels, and with all the host of heaven, while they laud and magnify

God's glorious name. These things must inevitably elevate and adorn while they correct and sanctify ; and the widest and longest experience fully proves that they do so. But there is yet another, and though a lower, still unquestionably a very influential promoter of the same great effects. This is to be found even in the manner in which, in the revealed Word, the religion of Jesus is proposed to us. There is nothing low, nothing mean, nothing pitiful, nothing clandestine, to be met with throughout the whole of the revelation of Christ. All is grand and open and noble ; the motives of the Gospel are all as honest and sincere as they are pure and uncontaminated ; the precepts of the Gospel are all as distinct and unambiguous as they are lovely and of good report ; the policy of the Gospel is all as straightforward, bold, and transparent, as it is holy, good, and wise. Perhaps there is nothing which so completely characterizes, and at the same time identifies the

religion of Jesus Christ as this ; nothing which draws so decisive a line between it and every false religion ; and, more than this, between it and every adulterated religion, every human modification of the true.

It would not be difficult to find a thousand examples to illustrate these observations, but we will content ourselves with the corroboration they receive from the single injunction of the text ! Consider for a moment the circumstances under which it was delivered, the time when it was first so strongly enforced, and you cannot but acknowledge, that if it stood alone, it is so entirely adverse to the dictates of a carnal policy, so completely contrary to what man would term the interest of the faith to which it refers, that to every unprejudiced mind, while it powerfully corroborates the truths to which I have just adverted of the ennobling character of the Gospel, it cannot but form a strong additional proof of the

Divine origin of a religion which would voluntarily subject itself to such a test. The Jews had just before passed a law that whosoever should confess Christ to be the Messiah, should be “put out of the synagogue;” in other words, should be excommunicated, the heaviest punishment they were, at that period of their history, empowered legally to inflict. The Gentiles would, as the omniscient Saviour perfectly foreknew, soon establish an ordinance, that he who should dare to confess Christ should be thrown to the wild beasts, or carried to the stake. All human probability, therefore, of the spread of Christianity, would seem to rest upon the fact, during its infancy, of its quiet, silent, unobtrusive progress, and this to depend upon the great tact and management in the mode in which it was promulgated, to rely almost for its existence on the judicious reserve which its followers should evince in preaching the peculiar truths of the Gospel; and that therefore

not merely its prosperity, but, as I have said before, its very existence, would depend upon the concealment and secrecy of its few and timid and powerless followers. It was in the very face of all these opposing circumstances, in contradiction to every dictate of human policy and worldly expediency, that our Lord delivered the declaration of the text, “ Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” It is hardly possible to conceive a declaration which, to the worldly wise and worldly prudent, must have sounded so ill-timed, so injudicious, so insane, so suicidal. Nevertheless, upon this command, the Saviour was content to take his stand, and in the face of a world’s hatred, and a world’s opposition, to require his followers boldly and plainly to confess their allegiance to him ; and in spite of the obvious dangers thus, not indeed

courted, but certainly not in any degree evaded, to plant triumphantly the religion of the cross upon the ruins of every false religion in the world.

If, then, our Divine Master could, under circumstances so extremely adverse, still think it right to declare and to enforce the command of the text, it must be in all ages the bounden duty of his ministers to carry forward the self-same message, and to urge and impress it upon his people; as much in Christian England as it was in Antichristian Jerusalem, or in Heathen Rome. No change of time, no alteration of circumstances, effecting any the least change or the least modification in the dictates of Him who is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” and “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

We shall proceed, then, to apply this subject to ourselves, and herein, with peculiar reference to that large portion of our younger hearers, who, since the last

Sabbath, have openly confessed the Saviour of the world. We will consider—

First, The necessity of obeying the injunction of the text.

Secondly, The prominence given to this duty in the Word of God, and some few of those common incidents in daily life in which all classes of Christians are called upon, from time to time, by the providence of God, to yield obedience to it.

First, with regard to the constant and perpetual necessity of our obedience ; if we look to the dictates of self-interest, at least as interpreted by worldly wisdom, or carnal policy, no doubt this might be made a very prominent feature in the discourse. We might point out the danger, the impolicy, the unadvisableness of confessing Christ, at all times, and on all occasions, even before the ungodly great, before the sneering Infidel, before the incredulous man of science, or the scoffing man of wit ; and we might shew

the advantage of a judicious selection of times and seasons in which, and persons before whom, Christ should be confessed. But, if we treat this portion of the subject by a simple reference to the revealed Word of our God, as we would desire to treat every subject from this place, nothing can be shorter, or more plain, or more simple. Our Lord disposes of the inquiry in a single word, "Whosoever." There is no distinction as to time, or place, or person. It is, "Whosoever shall confess," and "whosoever shall deny." It is just one of those injunctions, upon hearing which, even the apostle exclaimed, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" But this ought not to take you by surprise. When, my younger brethren, you lately entered upon the profession of Christianity, you were plainly and distinctly told that it was no flowery mead that you were invited to walk in, but a narrow path and a straight gate, through which you were to strive and to

press, and, as the inspired writer says, to "agonize," if you hope to enter the kingdom of heaven. You were told that you were no longer to travel with the crowd, upon the broad road which leadeth to destruction ; that the flock of Christ was invariably called by himself a "little flock ;" that you were not to expect to discover the road with ease, and to keep it without effort, for that Christ himself again had said, "Few there be that find it ;" that the religion you profess is never spoken of in Scripture under any other metaphors than those of a race, a journey, a wrestling-match, or a battle : that it is vain, utterly vain, to imagine that you shall escape from the difficulties which patriarchs, prophets, and saints, in all ages, and in all countries, have encountered ; that he who turns aside from the steep and rugged and difficult path which has ever been trodden, by the people of Christ, to the heavenly Zion, and hopes to find some shorter road across the fields, will

not only lose his labour, but unless he return, to what the prophet Isaiah denominates, the “king’s high-way,” will also lose his soul.

We proceed, Secondly, to offer a few remarks upon the prominence given to this subject, in the Word of God, and to point out a few of those instances in daily life, which arise, from time to time, to elicit our obedience to it.

Confession of the Lord Jesus Christ is made, from the very beginning, in God’s Word, one of the first and strongest tests of discipleship. When the Gospel days were foretold by the prophets under the old dispensation, we find the confession of the lips bears as distinct a part in the promises of what God would do for his people, as the conversion of their hearts; thus, while we hear Jeremiah speaking of Gospel times, in that well-known passage, “After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,” we hear

Isaiah describing the self-same times, he says, "This is my covenant with them;" "My words, which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever." And that we may not suppose that the mouth and the heart are merely convertible terms, we find David, in the very same Psalm, praying, first, that his heart might be inclined to God's testimonies, and then that the Word of truth might not be taken out of his mouth, but that he might have courage to confess publicly, what he had received and rejoiced in privately. In accordance with the same fact, we find the Apostle to the Philippians, declaring not only that "at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow," this might be done privily, but adding, "and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." While, again, St. John says, "Whosoever shall confess," not merely

whosoever shall believe, "that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." And, perhaps, still more strongly in the well-known passage in Romans, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

We may then, without in any degree straining the sense of Scripture, derive from these passages this unquestionable fact; that as there cannot be true confession of Christ without faith, so can there never be true and lively faith in Jesus Christ without confession of it; *i.e.*, without a readiness, when time and opportunity appear to require it of us, to speak plainly, honestly, unambiguously, of our feelings with regard to Christ and his religion, before the people of the world, before those who differ from us,—yea, if called to do so, as David says, before even kings, and not be ashamed. We are perfectly aware that confession of

Christ is at the present hour by no means the same painful and arduous thing that it once was; that in some sense the whole tide of the world may be said to have set in, in favour of Christianity; that religion, to a certain extent, at least in this country, indeed has become even fashionable! so that to confess the Lord Jesus Christ before men is altogether a totally different undertaking, in point of danger, from what it was in the days when such a confession led the way to the Roman amphitheatre, or the fires of Smithfield; or even, we may say, to what it was some fifteen or twenty years ago. Still will it always be, when fully, truly, scripturally performed, a difficult, and a trying, and a painful thing to flesh and blood. It is enough that God has commanded it as a perpetual duty of the Christian, to ensure the fact that Satan will take care that it shall never be easy of performance, shall never want the thorns and briers with which he has been

so well enabled to entwine every positive command of God. Take, for instance, the case of an individual in the lower ranks of life. You are, speaking after the fashion of men, dependent for your livelihood upon the will, perhaps, of an ungodly master or mistress, and they require from you some act of obedience which strikes directly at your prior obligation to your God; perhaps some open violation of the Lord's-day; perhaps some act of secret dishonesty or overreaching, which they may profess to think compatible with their duty as tradesmen or dealers.

This, then, is a case in which, even at the present day, it is no easy thing to confess the Lord Jesus Christ; to say with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" or with the apostles, to refuse the command with the simple declaration, "We ought to obey God rather than man;" and yet this is precisely one of those instances to which

our Lord himself referred, and for which, as he has given a difficult command, so will he certainly give grace to obey it.

Or again, in the case of domestic servants ; you are about to engage yourself in a family where you will be unable to fulfil God's command of hallowing his day by an attendance at his house of prayer. Here, then, you are bound to confess Christ before men, to reject such a situation whatever be its temporal advantages, because in a very important sense it would compel you to deny your Saviour.

But perhaps your trial may proceed, not from your masters, but from your companions, and is on that account even yet more difficult. You are requested to accompany them upon some Sabbath-breaking party, to forget the vows you have so lately taken upon you, and to join them in some act of immorality, or of sinful pleasure, or of gross intemperance ; how hard is it, not merely to refuse, but

to refuse upon the right and Christian principle, to confess Christ before men ; to say at once, ‘ I cannot thus disobey my Lord, I cannot thus dishonour him who died for me, and to whom I have pledged myself in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten.’ But here again, ask, and you shall have, seek, and you shall find; grace and wisdom and strength equal to your day are invariably bestowed, under all such circumstances, to those who seek them.

But the difficulty of confessing the Lord Jesus Christ before men, is by no means confined to the lower classes in society, it affects, and powerfully affects, all, without exception and without reserve, from the king upon the throne, to the prisoner in the dungeon. There is not an individual who is not, unless secured by the power of Divine grace on these subjects, afraid of his fellow-men, and, therefore, oftentimes ashamed of Christ, of his Word, of his will, of his people.

O, it is pitiful to think of the meanness and the paltriness of the natural heart of man, whatever be his station, nothing too low for it to stoop to, nothing too contemptible for it to practise: and this not alone in the poor and the needy and the uneducated, but in the highest and the noblest and the proudest.

How many are there, for example, in this great metropolis at this season, who are seen crowding into the nocturnal retreats of fashionable folly, not because they have any real pleasure in them, but because they are ashamed to be missed there; afraid of losing caste, if they are not seen with the great and noble; afraid of being thought more religious than those around them; afraid—must I say so—of confessing Christ. How many are there at this moment, whose hearts are convinced of the necessity, the propriety, yea, even the comfort, of a more open, decided, uncompromising avowal of the Lord Jesus Christ, a casting-in of their

lot with the lot of his people, and yet who dare not do it; who dare not confess him, because they fear the face of man, because they dread the opinion of man more than of his Maker. They are, therefore, bold where they should be ashamed, and ashamed where they should be bold. They are bold in speaking of their sins, of their follies, of their vices; but they are ashamed of speaking, even before their oyn friends and acquaintances, of God, of Christ, and of heaven. They are ashamed of the stricter observances of a religious life, even while they partially practise them; ashamed of a religious book, yea, even of the Bible itself, and would hide it from the eyes of an ungodly companion, even though they read it: and they would be ashamed if, in such a state of mind, they could enter heaven—they would be ashamed of heaven itself, until they had well looked around them, and fully ascertained that none of a different opinion from themselves, whose

scoff, or sneer, or ridicule they dread, had been admitted there. May God have mercy upon them, and give them grace, before it be too late, to see the misery of such a time-serving waiting upon him, to know that a secret belief, which shuns an open avowal of Christ, is removed but one step, and that a very short one, from an absolute and positive unbelief and open denial.

Still we do not speak of a conscientious confession of Christ as an easy duty, or one which, even under the mildest circumstances, can be performed by your own unaided resolution, however powerful.

A holy boldness in the confession of the Lord Jesus Christ, is always spoken of in his Word as undoubtedly the gift of God. “The Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded, therefore have I set my face like a flint ; and I know that I shall not be ashamed, I shall not be confounded, for God is at

my right hand." And, again, "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads." And acting upon these and many other promises, we find the apostles distinctly asking this as a gift from God, "Grant unto thy servants, that, with all boldness, we may speak thy Word." We believe, then, that there is no situation, whether social and domestic, or public and official, in which, if we really seek God's grace for this important and difficult duty, it will be withheld. The cause of our repeated failures is, that we either attempt the confession of Christ in our own strength, or we do not attempt it with a single eye to God's glory. Wherever either of these is the case, we must expect defeat and disgrace and disappointment, and we shall most certainly fall. Peter is an example of the former, (the failure in confessing Christ, when trusting to our own strength,) and the many

grievous instances of the lapsed, during the times of Heathen persecution, form abundant examples of the latter.

But it is not merely to encouragement that we must look to enable us to fulfil this most difficult duty ; our Lord himself has seen fit to add to this the painful alliance of his threatenings : “ Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” Whenever, then, you are tempted, and who is not at times so tempted, to deny, either by word or action, the Lord who bought you with his precious blood ; to be ashamed of the doctrines, the precepts, or the ordinances of his religion, and how many are kept from the Lord’s table by this very feeling, bring strongly before your mind the short duration of this world’s opinion and this world’s censure. Realize the great assemblage to which our Lord so briefly alludes in the words, “ him will I deny before the angels of God.” O think how rapidly all

is passing which has yet to be between that hour and the present; of what profit will all which now most influences your soul be to you upon that coming day! To stand before the Saviour's throne dis-owned, discarded, disgraced for ever; a convicted time-server, a detected hypocrite; to go up to that presence, that awful, that unspeakably awful presence, full of the unholy, the groundless confidence of those who shall say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" was I not baptized in thy name? did I not attend in thine house? did I not eat at thy table? did I not acknowledge thee when in the presence of thy people? And to hear, in reply, "I never knew you;" you denied me with your lips, you denied me by your life, and the immutable word has long since gone forth, "He that denieth me before men, I will deny before the angels of God."

While, on the other hand, my Christian brethren,—and especially you, my younger

Christian friends, that have lately entered upon the Christian course of voluntary allegiance,—Who can worthily estimate, who can think or conceive aright of the unspeakable peace and comfort of that hour, if it bring with it, amidst the wreck and ruin of a perishing world, the blessed confession from the lips of Him to whom all judgment is committed, that He is yours, and that you are his? How blessed to be confessed by Christ, when heaven and earth shall pass away; to be acknowledged then, as a sheep of his own flock, a lamb of his fold, a soul of his own redeeming: to hear him say, ‘This man, this woman, this child, and doubtless many such shall be there, bore the scoff and the ridicule and the opprobrium of an ungodly world, for my sake; and “them that honour me, I will honour :”’ this young disciple was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, he knew it, loved it, practised it; he confessed me by his life, and he confessed me with his lips, and now, before assembled worlds, I

fulfil my promise, I confess him before my Father which is in heaven, and before the angels of God; I have justified him, I have sanctified him, and will for ever glorify him; “That where I am, there ye may be also.” “Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.””

Brethren, let us all dwell much upon that day, think often upon that promise, and by God’s grace we shall not be ashamed of him whose name we bear, whose servants we are, whose cross we have professed to carry, and “who of God ” will then be made “unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.””

SERMON XII.

G O F O R W A R D.

EXODUS XIV. 15.

"SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY GO FORWARD."

IN every portion of the history of the Israelites there is so much to interest, so much to edify, so much to encourage the Christian, that there are few parts of Scripture more "profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," than those which refer to the perils and the preservations of God's chosen people.

It is my intention this morning to bring before you one of the most remarkable passages in their astonishing history;

one in which the power of God and his faithfulness to his people are so gloriously developed, that no Christian, be his age or experience what they may, can review it without the deepest feelings of gratitude, that he has himself been brought to the knowledge of such a God, and reconciled by the blood of Christ to such a Father.

The incident in the history of the Israelites which led to the command of the text is as follows. Their long and grievous captivity under Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had just been brought to a conclusion by the miraculous interference of the Almighty. But their difficulties, which they no doubt had imagined would have been at an end, appeared to be rather increased than diminished by the change. While they were in bondage they were not indeed happy, for they were the slaves of tyrannical masters, and they received from those they served neither remuneration nor pity. But what was the change of state which they

had now experienced? They had been marched out into "the wild and waste-howling wilderness," where there was not shade to shelter them from the burning heat of the sun, no plentiful supply of water to slake their thirst, no rest for the sole of their weary feet.

These were difficulties sufficient, and more than sufficient to have appalled the stoutest heart; but even these were by no means the most severe with which the Israelites had to contend. The inexorable Pharaoh, from whom his sufferings had at last wrung only a constrained permission to depart, no sooner found that they were really gone, than his heart was again hardened, and he resolved once more to bring them back to the scene of their captivity. He therefore collects all his chariots of war, his horsemen and his armies, and follows the unarmed and unprotected multitudes of Israel into the very depths of the wilderness.

Behold then, brethren, the awful and

critical situation of the people of God ! Behind them was this enraged monarch, who had now overtaken them, and drawn around them the armies of his mighty ones, and encamped so closely upon them, that nothing but his command appears to be wanting to put them to instant and remediless slaughter. Before them were the waters of the Red Sea, which no human being had ever forded. Can we conceive a more terrifying or a more hopeless situation ? Who can be surprised at reading, "When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid." Then was demonstrated their want of faith, of confidence, of reliance in the power of their Almighty Leader : "Because there were no graves in Egypt," said the Israelites, "hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness ? It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness."

This, then, was the remarkable moment that the words of the text were spoken. In answer to the desponding and faithless declaration which I have just read to you, Moses himself, alarmed and uncertain, had replied, "Stand still ; the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." But here even Moses appears to have decided wrong. Great as is the duty oftentimes of standing still and waiting for the Lord, and a very important and trying duty it is, and many are the promises attached to its fulfilment, there is also the still more necessary duty of striving in the strength of the Lord, and acting fearlessly and unhesitatingly under his guidance, and at his command. This was the exercise of faith to which God saw fit, on the present occasion, to command the Israelites ; and his answer to the ejaculations, or it may be, the mental prayer of Moses,—for no prayer is recorded,—was the commandment of the

text: “ Wherefore criest thou unto me ? ” saith the Lord, “ speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.”

Never was there a period since time began, when such a command, if uttered by man, would have been so futile ; when such a command, even though proceeding from the mouth of the Almighty God himself, must have appeared so absolutely impracticable ; and yet there never was a time when God permitted it to be more triumphantly obeyed.

The Israelites went forward, and the waters of the sea were immediately divided by the word of God ; those remote recesses of the ocean into which the light of day had never penetrated, were all made visible to their astonished sight ; the very element through which they passed appeared to change its nature ; to open up from its extremest depths, and to stand as “ a wall,” says the Word of God, on their right hand and on their left,

while the people of God passed through the depths of the sea without even wetting the soles of their feet.

The Egyptians also went forward, and the path looked safe and dry before them, and the waters stood as a wall on their right hand and on their left. Both the friends and the enemies of God, therefore, were together in this awful and astonishing passage. Both had with equal fearlessness advanced together, but there was still an important difference: the Israelites had gone forward at the command, and therefore in the strength of the Almighty; while the Egyptians had advanced in the plenitude of their own pride, and in the might of their own strength. Do you not, then, already anticipate the difference of their fates?

All that fearful night the two hostile armies were together traversing that road of miracle; but we read that the angel of God, who usually went before the Is-

raelites, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud also moved and went behind them, standing between them and the Egyptians, shedding light and comfort and assurance of protection upon the people of God, but hanging in portentous darkness upon their enemies; so that, as the Word of God declares, “The one army came not near the other all night.” “And it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the Lord looked,” such is the emphatic language of holy writ, “unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and troubled the hosts of the Egyptians,” and made them to go heavily. Then Moses, at the command of the Most High, “stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength, when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew them in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and

the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh ; there remained not so much as one of them."

Interesting as is the narrative, brethren, I will not enlarge upon it, but will rather leave you to read it and reflect upon it for yourselves ; for the time usually allotted to spiritual instruction is so brief, that I am anxious to hasten to the personal application of the subject before us.

Let us, then, proceed, first, to trace the likeness existing between the Israelites, recently delivered from the land of their captivity, and those among you who are but newly awakened to your own position as sinners, and desirous of being indeed delivered from worse than Egyptian bondage, and forwarded on the road to the everlasting mansions.

One of the earliest feelings by which you are likely to be influenced is of this nature. We will suppose, and we trust, with regard to some among you, rightly suppose, that you are tired of the servi-

tude of sin, or of the world, wearied with the bondage of Satan, in which we all, by nature, are enthralled, and in which many, alas! how many, continue at the present moment entangled; but you have seen, by God's grace, your misery and your danger, and you imagine, and properly imagine, that a great and effectual step has been taken in bringing you to this state of feeling, for it is the work of God's Spirit, even of Him alone; but you are led, naturally, though erroneously, to expect that your present comfort and happiness and security will be as certain as your more distant and undoubted prospect: *i. e.* (taking the Israelites as the type of the Christian), you expect to enjoy the happiness of Canaan, while traversing the wilderness which lies before it. You are enabled, with the apostle, in some degree to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and of the rest which remaineth for his people, but you expect and want even more than this, you love

not the wearisome travel, the hard-fought conflicts, "the great fight of afflictions," which will render that rest so doubly dear to all who are permitted to obtain it. You would like, even while on earth, at once to place your foot upon the threshold of heaven, before it has been soiled and pierced and bruised by the ruggedness of the way which leads to it. This would doubtless be the course of nature, but it is not the course of grace. Just as it was to have been expected that Pharaoh, who had so long and so uninterruptedly enjoyed the services of the Israelites, should make many an effort to regain them for his servants, so the Word of God, and the daily experience of Christians, teach us to expect that the powers of darkness will league together, in close and active alliance, to endeavour to regain their victim, and to snatch the prey from the hand of the great Deliverer. It is not only most natural that Satan should do so, but it is most certain that he does do so. And if

there be a time in your Christian life which calls most loudly for your own efforts and caution and circumspection, and the prayers and counsel and encouragement of your Christian friends, and the special aid and assistance of God's good Spirit, it is the period which succeeds that when you experience the first effectual struggling of the Spirit of grace against the spirit of darkness in your heart ; the time when the stubborn will is bending, and the hard heart softening, and the affections, hitherto captivated by the world, are loosening its bonds, and the whole man is beginning to return to the God and Father of all his mercies; for then it is that the first tender upspringing of the spiritual plant is in the greatest danger, that the faint flame, as yet scarcely kindled, appears liable to be most easily blown out. Then it is that the Devil rages most violently, and goes to the full length of his chain, and leaves no effort untried, no nerve unstrained, if he may but reach and devour

the escaping captive. Then it is, that he revives within your breast passions and desires which you had hoped were utterly extinguished ; that you are at times almost tempted to exclaim in the sadness of a desponding spirit, to the God and Saviour of your soul, " Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians, for it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." But, brethren, you who experimentally know these things, take courage, you shall neither " serve the Egyptians," nor " die in the wilderness." The powers of darkness are indeed in league against you, as they have been against every child of God since time began, as they were against your Divine and perfect Master ; they may endeavour to magnify to your apprehension the perils which are before you, the seas of danger and of opposition through which you may be called to pass ; they may strive to convince you that what is painful is insufferable, that what

is difficult is insurmountable; they may have the power of knowing much of the real difficulties with which the path of every believer is encompassed, but be assured, they do not know, they never can know, for nothing but happy and blessed experience can teach the strength of the arm which will guide, the light of the countenance which will cheer, the love of the Spirit of Christ which will protect you. The uncreated angel of the covenant has pitched his tent and unfurled his standard between you and your spiritual enemies; it is light and peace to you, but darkness and dismay to them. In the desert through which you are to pass, you shall find the highway of the Lord; in the deepest waters of trial and affliction and temptation which await you, there is a dry path and a safe path prepared for you, upon which they cannot follow you far, in which your footsteps shall neither stumble, nor slide.

If then you have, any among you,

begun to feel that the course is more arduous, and the prospect less encouraging, than you once thought them, how earnestly would I desire to impress upon you the instructive lesson which has this day been set before you. You perceive what God has done for those who obeyed and trusted him ; you hear from the words of his never-broken promises what he will do for every penitent who comes to him through the blood of his dear Son ; and do you now ask, what shall you do ? our reply shall be made to you in the words of the text, "Go forward." In the case of the Israelites, it would have been death to have retreated, or to have remained stationary. In your case, to remain stationary is impossible ; you must advance or recede. To retreat, would be as certain destruction to you, as to the bands of Israel ; there is, therefore, no alternative of safety but in advancing.

We would say then to each and to all among you, for none have advanced so

far as to be beyond the reach of this counsel, rest not in present attainments, let those attainments be what they may; there is still much to be learnt; which you have not learnt; much to be practised, which you have not practised; much in your spiritual life to be experienced, which you have not experienced; therefore, let your great aim and object be to advance. We say, "Go forward," faithfully and prayerfully, circumspectly and boldly. Remember, for your encouragement, under what peculiar circumstances of danger and of difficulty this command in the text was first given. A deep and mighty ocean crossed their path, and yet the Israelites were ordered to advance. The moment they boldly and faithfully obeyed, every danger vanished, every difficulty was overcome. The waters fell back before them, not a hair of their head was touched, not a sole of their foot was wetted; while, had they attempted to return, they must have

perished with the Egyptians. Such, also, will be your safety if you advance; your ruin if you recede. Let your prayer be, "Lord, increase my faith." According unto "thy faith," said our Lord in the days of his flesh, and thus says he now, "According to thy faith be it done unto thee." So will you be enabled to fulfil this most important, most difficult command. The most timid child is not afraid to walk in the dark, from the moment that he touches his father's hand, or hears his father's voice. Why is this? Because he has a perfect trust in his father's power and love; therefore the danger is no danger to him. Only trust God, with half the confidence which you expect from your own children, and your life will be the Christian's life of faith, and your walk the Christian's walk of decision and boldness.

I have said before, that this injunction is needful to us all. Who then is that faithful and wise servant, who is never

found sleeping at his post, when he ought, like the wise virgins, to be watching; or standing still, when he ought, like the advancing Israelites, to be "going forward"? But, if needful to us all, is it not pre-eminently needful to those among you, who have been privileged for years to hear and to believe the word of truth, and yet whose spiritual advancement bears no proportion to your spiritual knowledge? Who, when you look backward for a year, or it may be, for many years, appear to be standing identically in the same spot, in the spiritual life, which you then occupied. No warmer interest in these things now than then; no greater frequency in your applications to the Book of God, or to the blood of Christ; no greater fervency in your prayers; no stronger and more successful restraint over your passions, your worldliness, your temper, or your tongue; no more self-denying or persevering efforts to bring every thought

into captivity to the obedience of Christ, or to labour, and delight to labour, in good works for his honour and glory. Surely, brethren, if you are conscious that these, or any of these allegations, apply to you, you will not deny that the injunction of the text also applies to you, with peculiar force. You will feel ashamed, that, after all God has done for you, temporally and spiritually, you have made such slow, such inadequate progress in the Christian life, such little advancement in the way to heaven. But you will not, as too many do, rest satisfied with the mere acknowledgment of your short-comings; you will not content yourself even with your feeling of them, and regret for them, however heartfelt or sincere. If you are in earnest, if you are truly sensible of this deficiency, you will set yourself to consider seriously, earnestly, prayerfully, the cause of your non-advancement. Is it your natural indolence, the disinclination

to the things of God, we all have, flowing from a corrupt nature and a perverted heart? Is it the too powerful attractions of a world in which you are daily immersed, and whose fascinations you cannot resist? Is it the difficulty of your peculiar situation which hedges you around with impediments always opposing, and weights continually pressing upon you? Well, be it what it may, your remedy is the same, for you will remember that, when we spoke of the Israelites and the Egyptians passing through the Red Sea, the only difference between them was, that the former walked with God, and the latter without him. Therefore the former made the passage and went forward, while the latter perished in the attempt. So with yourselves. You must look for strength unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, whose grace is sufficient for you, and you will persevere. You must seek a counterpoise for all these things

in the promised influences of his Holy Spirit, to be your pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. Neither must you seek this coldly and languidly. You must say, ‘My life, my soul, my eternity, depend upon my going forward; for what I have long called standing still, has, I find, been in reality going backward. My prayers, my zeal, my love, my obedience, are not only not improved, but they are not what they were; I cared more and felt more for all these things once than I now do; and it is evident that, unless checked by the strong hand of my God, and again drawn forward and brought into closer union with my Redeemer, I shall continue to recede, I shall ultimately sink, I shall perish everlasting-ingly.’ Once be led, by God’s grace, to feel, acknowledge, and act thus, and we have no fear for the result. The promise, and the Saviour who made that promise, are both your own, “They shall never

perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

But I must add, in conclusion, a few words to you, who, by God's grace, do not require to be thus urged forward by the recollection that you are falling back.

We trust that many of you are endeavouring to fulfil the command upon which we have this day spoken. Striving to advance, not as though you had already attained, either were already perfect, but forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, you daily press, or strive to press, towards the mark of your high calling.

You, also, have a duty to perform, and we say to you, "Go forward," gratefully, cheerfully, joyfully. Prove to those around you, that religion is not the dull and stagnant and cheerless service which the worldling thinks it. Demonstrate that, while all your motives and all your

aims and all your hopes are higher, infinitely higher than his can ever be, your comforts, also, and your peace, your cheerfulness and your resignation and your happiness, are all of them equally above and superior to any which he can dream of. That as you advance in years, that period when the hope of the hypocrite fails, when the temper of the mere worldling becomes too often irritable and querulous, your enjoyments are but heightening, your prospects becoming less clouded and more serene; that the glorious anticipation before you is throwing many a beam of light into nature's darkest hour and over her most wintry day; and that you are able, humbly, yet confidently, seriously, yet cheerfully, to go forward from strength to strength, assured that there is One, who, when your heart and your flesh faileth, will be, because he has promised to be, "the strength of your heart and your portion for ever."

This ought to be, my beloved Christian brethren, this will be, if you seek it from him to whose Holy Spirit we are taught to trace every good and perfect gift, "love, joy, and peace" among the number, this will be the frame of mind in which you will be enabled to live, and to glorify God, and to recommend, by your example, the religion which you love.

Thus advancing in the strength and in the footsteps of your Divine Leader, you shall be enabled to "go forward," boldly, consistently, joyfully, and, at the last, triumphantly, through Him who loved you, and gave himself for you.

SERMON XIII.

SANCTIFIED AFFLICTIONS.

2 COR. IV. 17, 18.

"FOR OUR LIGHT AFFLCTION, WHICH IS BUT FOR A MOMENT, WORKETH FOR US A FAR MORE EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY; WHILE WE LOOK NOT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN, BUT AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN; FOR THE THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN ARE TEMPORAL; BUT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN ARE ETERNAL."

THERE are few things of which men form so false an estimate as of the calamities and trials of this mortal life. The merely thoughtless man, when suddenly overtaken in his career of sin by any of the multiplied afflictions which beset our path, plunges deeper into the ocean of folly in which he lives; and while he carries the barbed arrow in his side from

scene to scene, and from place to place, and from pleasure to pleasure, considers his affliction only as one of the unlucky accidents of the world in which he lives, and consoles himself with the aphorism of the poet, "The longest day, live till to-morrow, shall have passed away." The more reflecting man of the world views these same afflictions only as miseries which he is compelled to endure because there is no escape; but he repines while he suffers, and while he writhes beneath the hand of a chastening God, refuses to humble himself and to "hear the rod or him who appointeth it." How strikingly different is the case with the Christian when he is subjected to the afflicting visitations of his God. Although he feels as deeply, as acutely as the men of the world, he has within him a settled and never-failing principle that moderates his sorrow, sanctifies his affliction, and bestows a peace and comfort and strong consolation, which none but a real child

of God can ever know. He neither looks at his calamity as an unlucky accident, nor as a grievous and unavoidable misery; he knows that nothing, either of good or evil, comes to him, which is unintended for him, or unappointed for him by him whose highest attribute is love. He sees the trial as written against his name in the Lamb's book of life, as a clause in the everlasting covenant, as one link in that eternal chain of providences and mercies which is wound around himself and all who are dear to him on earth, and which is fastened to the throne of God's immutability and love in heaven. If you are a child of God, therefore, you will remember that God has engaged to keep you from the evils, the snares, the temptations, of the world. In the covenant of grace God has engaged himself to purge away your sins, to brighten your graces, to crucify your hearts to the world, and to prepare you and to preserve you for his heavenly kingdom. Afflic-

tions form one of the methods by which he usually effects this; and it is agreeable to his covenant, even to that portion of it which he has seen fit to reveal to us, that they should do so, for has he not said, “If my children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail?” Afflictions, therefore, are the very fruits of God’s faithfulness, to which the covenant binds him. God would be unfaithful if, first or last, more or less, he did not afflict his people. It is this persuasion, therefore, that enables every real child of God to exclaim, even from a sorrowing or a broken heart, ‘I know that this affliction comes to me directly from the hand of a Father who loves me, who does not willingly grieve even

the most wayward of his children, who would not willingly afflict me. He knows that I need it, he knows that if his chastening hand were not often upon me, I should be continually “starting aside like a broken bow;” I bow before his justice, I acknowledge his mercy, I bless him for this tribulation, and my daily prayer is, that it may work that holy and sanctifying effect upon my heart, without which I fear I shall never be rendered “meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.” How completely, my brethren, do these blessed feelings, common to all the children in our Father’s redeemed family, draw the sting from every trial, and sweeten the bitterest visitation; how entirely do they enable us to enter into the mind of him who wrote the words of the text, and who spake of some of the heaviest trials which ever weighed down mortality, as “our light affliction, which is but for a moment.”

But these considerations do not stand

alone in the heart of the Christian ; there are others equally availing, and all flowing from the same source, tending to make the afflictions of earth both light and momentary. The most influential of these is the certainty which the Christian enjoys, that in all his losses he still possesses something which he cannot lose ; that in being enabled to say with the Church of old, "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" or with the apostle, " Nothing shall separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ;" he has that of which neither affliction, nor death, nor time, nor eternity can deprive him, and in comparison of which all that he has lost, or can lose, are utterly insignificant. The strength of this principle, in producing the effect of which I speak, has often in all ages of the Church been demonstrated. During the persecutions of the martyrs it seems to have been more powerfully and sweetly operative than any other. Among many similar instances

recorded by Fox, there is one of a pious woman who, when taken before the cruel Bishop Bonner, and threatened that her husband should be put to death, undauntedly replied, "Christ is my husband." When told that her children should be taken away, answered again, "Christ is better to me than ten sons." When threatened that she should be robbed of every outward comfort, and stripped even of her raiment, still had faith to reply, "Yea, but Christ is mine, and you cannot strip me of him." The assurance that she had a saving interest in her Redeemer, that the Beloved was hers, and she was his, made every sorrow light, and every trial momentary.

The apostle does not, however, content himself in the text with asserting the lightness and the transitoriness of the Christian's sorrow, he goes further than this, he declares that in its effects it is a positive blessing; he says, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment,

worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Blessed words! may the Lord fulfil them to every soul among us in our hour of need. But let us be careful that while we thus seek their fulfilment we first duly appreciate their intention.

It involves a point upon which the natural heart is too often widely mistaken, viz.,—that great sufferings cannot but deserve and obtain for us great rewards. Be assured, my brethren, that nothing could be farther from the intention of the apostle in the text than to countenance such an error. When he says that our affliction "worketh for us," nothing could be farther from his thoughts than that the affliction should in a meritorious manner, purchase or procure for us "the eternal weight of glory;" this would at once contradict a large portion of the declarations of Holy Writ, which invariably pronounce eternal life to be the unmerited "gift of God." Our title to that blessed

inheritance, thanks be to God, is a very different and a far more certain one ; it is a title written in the blood of the everlasting covenant, and made over to us when we are adopted into the family of God ; for the Word of God declares, "If children," whether suffering children or rejoicing children matters not, but if children, "then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Assuredly, therefore, never could the heaviest sufferings merit the slightest reward, much less could the trials of a passing moment merit the joys of a never-ending eternity.

In what sense, then, can the words of the apostle be fairly taken ? doubtless in this, that these afflictions work for us a far more exceeding weight of glory, by working in us a far more fit and holy frame of mind, and therefore a far greater capacity for the enjoyment of it.

Do I, then, speak to any of you this day, who have been visited with trials from the hand of your heavenly Father—

and at some period or other of their course who has not? Any of you who have suffered in your families, in your property, in your health; any who have come, it may be even this day, from scenes of sorrow to the house of God? While the portion of Scripture before you is well calculated, by God's blessing, to minister to your peace, be assured it can only do so, by ministering to your holiness. It indeed tells you that your afflictions shall work for your happiness and glory; but is this an unqualified assertion? Do all afflictions minister thus mercifully to the soul which suffers them? Far, very far from it. Many a man leaves a bed of sickness with a heart more hardened against God, a life more totally at variance with his will, than he entered it. Many a mother commits her child to the grave, but does not, alas! bury with it her own hostility and indifference to the things of God. Many a one loses his health, his property, all that

he possesses in this world, without obtaining the smallest portion in that better part which shall not be taken from him. Does the experience of none among you, my brethren, justify this? Have none among you suffered frequently, suffered deeply, from the hand of an afflicting God, and yet are little conscious of having ever derived any real spiritual benefit? Are there to none among you events in your past life, that weigh heavily upon your spirit, which you can never eradicate from your memory, and never dwell upon without the most painful and distressing feelings, and yet have no reason, no scriptural reason, for supposing, that these, or any of these, have worked, or are working, for good? Then let us examine a little into the cause; this is so contrary to God's intention, that there must be some fault, some failure in yourselves. It is not improbable that we shall find the cause of this failure, if we look at the limitation of the apostle in

the text; he assures you that your afflictions shall work for good, while you “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.”

Here, then, is at once the key to the mystery; here is the reason, if it be so, plainly set before you, why no trial, no sorrow, no affliction of yours, has ever really worked for your future glory. You have contented yourself, while under it, at looking at the things which are seen. You have dwelt solely or chiefly upon your trouble, or your disappointment, and never raised your eyes beyond it; you have viewed it in all its distressing bearings, have pondered upon every secondary cause which led to it, have dwelt upon all its sorrowful effects, have thought how greatly such an event, if it had occurred, would have mitigated it, how surely such a line of conduct would have prevented it, how much less you should have suffered, if there had been but one little circumstance in your

calamity different from what it was. In fact you have kept your eye fixed upon "the things which are seen," and you have, in consequence, missed the blessing which you might otherwise have reaped. You have just adopted the precise line of conduct deprecated in the text, and which never has, and never shall, so God's Word declares, bring either peace, or comfort, or profit to the afflicted soul. My beloved brethren, much of the choicest portion of Christianity consists in this, in closing the eye of sense, and opening the eye of faith. Adopt now then for the first time this new line of conduct; you have gained neither present comfort, nor future hope, by all that you have hitherto attempted; surely, then, if it be but an experiment, it is worth the trial. Endeavour, therefore, to follow the injunction of the apostle; cease to dwell upon your troubles and your sorrows, to look only at the things which are seen; close this eye of sense, and begin by

opening the eye of faith, to look at "the things which are not seen." Instead of the poor perishing creature which has been the sole cause of your sorrows, the sole object of your regards, look at the eternal God who is "All in All." Instead of poring upon the trials and miseries of time, look at once with the steady gaze of faith, which will penetrate the veil ; look at once upon the glories of eternity. Instead of looking after those who have been taken from you, those in whose love and friendship you delighted, look at him, "whom having not seen," his people "love," even at that Saviour who to every believing soul is "precious."

How astonishing would be the influence upon all our minds if we could fully realize this ; if we could dwell with a constant meditation upon these unseen realities. I know how difficult it is to lift up the sorrowing head, and to raise the weeping eyes to heaven ; but there is one

who is able and willing to aid you in this blessed work, even the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Pray for his light and power, and he will take your eyes off the “things which are seen,” however endeared, and however precious, and fix them upon the unseen things which lie before you. The effect of such a change is incalculable, it will influence the events of every day, the feelings of every hour. From the moment you thus begin, under the teaching of God’s good Spirit, to make “the things which are not seen” the object of your thoughts, you will find a new temper of heart, a new bias to the soul; there will be an eternal principle within you carrying all your feelings forth to eternal ends. As it is in a far smaller degree in worldly matters, so will it be in an inconceivably great and glorious degree in spiritual things. Every worldly object appears large in proportion to its nearness. While therefore, all the petty business and interests of earth appear of a most

absorbing greatness to those who are for ever walking up and down among them, without a thought or a glance beyond them ; to you, who have thus, as it were, got upon the mount of eternity, they will be as mere specks in the distant prospect, all will be contracted within their true and proper limits. You will learn to look upon the weightiest business of earth as children's pastime, compared with the enjoyment of God, and the living for ever in the presence of a loved and loving Saviour. "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Yes, this is the great distinguishing characteristic ; this it is which gives them their influence and their power ; you look at the poor drooping blessings of earth, and you feel that in a few years even, at the best, they must inevitably wither within your grasp ; you turn to the glories of heaven, and you see them in all their native freshness and youth and beauty, when ten thousand

centuries shall have run their unwearied course. You look at the bitterest cup of sorrow which God has ever, or shall ever put into your hands, and you will drink it almost without a sigh, if you will but turn your eyes from its contents, and fix them upon those rivers of joy which are running for ever at God's right hand; and which, through the blood of Jesus, may all be made your own. These will be among the first and most obvious effects of dwelling upon the unseen realities of God. But there will be far greater and more blessed effects than these. As you become more and more interested in them, more entirely devoted to them, and occupied among them, your thoughts and your tempers and affections and pursuits will all be led to harmonize with them in a manner which you can now scarcely anticipate; and you will daily be obtaining a stronger assurance that you are indeed accepted of God; that Christ is yours, that the pardon of

sin is yours, that Divine favour is yours, and that heaven is your own. Surely, then, you will not hesitate to call the heaviest affliction light, the longest trial momentary, if it can be thus made instrumental in working for you, a “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” What that glory is, we are unable either to know or to describe, for an apostle was obliged to exclaim, “it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” Sufficient is, however, told us in the Word of God, to satisfy the largest imagination, to fulfil the most ample desires. All evil shall there be removed, all good shall there be enjoyed, and both throughout eternity.

All evil shall be removed. There are but three things which greatly trouble the people of God on earth, and not one of them shall be found in heaven.

The first is, sin, the continual back-sliding of our corrupt hearts; but there, there will be neither sin nor temptation, neither devils to tempt, nor a corrupt

heart to be tempted. We shall be all pure, as well as all glorious, for the Word of God has declared that his people shall be presented “a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.”

The second is, the frequent interruption of the sense of God’s favour. We are here in a perpetual state of cloud and sunshine; now, God lifts up the light of his countenance upon us, and we are cheered; and again, he hides his face from us, and we are troubled; but there, the communion will be constant, a day without night, an everlasting sunshine without a cloud. Perpetual service and perpetual enjoyment. “They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.”

The third thing which troubles us here is, the frequent recurrence of anxiety and difficulty and disappointment and sorrow. This also shall be at an end. There is no sighing, no sorrowing, no anxiety there.

Affliction gives place to glory—the light affliction which is but for a moment,—to the exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

While all evil shall thus be removed, all good shall as certainly be enjoyed. The great object of our eternal blessedness is God himself. We now enjoy something of him, but it is through a medium of a most imperfect nature, viz., through a weak and wavering faith, and a frail and feeble love: there it shall be through the medium of the clearest vision and of the most perfect love. If it be declared in the word of truth that even here, “he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit,” though the union be of that most imperfect nature to which I have just alluded, what will it be in that blessed place where the union shall be complete; when, “we shall see the King in his beauty,” and when our souls shall be “filled with all the fulness of God?” My brethren, it is hard for me to speak

of heaven, it is impossible for any one to speak correctly of it, until the great voice call upon us to come up and see what God has prepared for those who love him. It is enough to know that perfect vision shall produce perfect assimilation ; "We shall be like him," says St. John, "for we shall see him as he is." As iron, by lying in the fire, becomes as it were all fire, so shall the presence and sight of God our Saviour transform us into the perfect resemblance of God our Saviour. While perfect assimilation shall produce perfect happiness and perfect satisfaction, for the Psalmist declares, "When I wake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it;" the soul, with all its infinite capacities and all its infinite desires, shall be completely, fully, and for ever satisfied. This is all that God has revealed, all I desire to know; in having God we shall have enough, and in seeing, loving, and being made like him, we shall at once enter upon a state

of happiness as infinite in extent as it will be eternal in duration. That this may one day be experimentally known and enjoyed by every soul who now hears me, and by myself, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, &c.

SERMON XIV.

REDEEM THE TIME.

EPHESIANS v. 16.

"REDEEMING THE TIME, BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL."

OF all the talents with which the Almighty here on earth intrusts his creatures, time is the most important, and we fear we must add the most frequently abused. Our infancy is spent in idleness, our youth in thoughtlessness, our age in business; but which of them, as regards the great mass of mankind, can be said to be employed for God, or for the important purpose for which it is bestowed? All complain of the shortness of time, and yet most possess more than they know what

to do with, and every one more than he employs well. Still it is of this much-wasted and misapplied talent that we shall one day be called upon to render a strict account. Consider, then, how you would yourselves act under similar circumstances, and you may learn to know what you have reason to expect at the hands of God.

If you were to hire a labourer for a day's work, and he were to come to you in the evening, and upon your asking him, "How have you spent your day? what have you done for me?" he were to reply, "I have spent four hours in loitering or talking with my fellow-labourers, and four at my meals, and three more in working for myself, and the remaining hour I have dedicated to your service;" would you be satisfied with such a reply? would you pay that man his wages? I trow not. And yet let me ask you what better account, when you retire to rest at night, can you give to your Heavenly

Master of many a day which passes over you? After you have deducted all that has been spent with your fellow-labourers, at your meals, and in labouring for your bread which perisheth, what remains for God? And is not God a God of recompence? and has he not declared that as a man soweth so shall he also reap? Truly, then, unless we can render some better account than this, our day of reckoning will be a fearful day, and our sentence the sentence of the unprofitable and idle servant. Let us then seek for the aid of the Divine Spirit, to enable us to receive and to apply the valuable injunction of the text; that we may be taught so to employ our time, that when summoned to render an account, we may do it with joy.

I shall consider, then,

I. What it is to redeem time.

II. From what we should redeem it.

III. For what we should redeem it.

In explaining what is meant by redeeming time, I shall take the most simple

illustration possible; the word is in the original to buy out, and the English word redeem expresses this as closely as possible.

If an estate be mortgaged, if an article be pledged, the owner cannot repossess himself of them, unless he is able to buy them out, or redeem them. By the use of this term, therefore, the apostle not merely urges us to future diligence, but most strongly implies our former improvidence and misuse of time; the very fact that it is necessary to redeem it, implies that we have, as it were, mortgaged it to Satan, pledged it to vanity and sin. Now strictly speaking, time misapplied is irrevocable; the hours and days and years that have been so improvidently disposed of, are among these unredeemed pledges which must remain, as evidences of our folly and our guilt, to all eternity. The sin may, blessed be God, be removed by a penitent application to the blood of our great Redeemer;

the guilt may be washed away, the iniquity be blotted out for ever ; but the years so spent can never be recalled, redeemed, or brought back again ; the hours which we have sacrificed before the shrine of foolish or of guilty pleasure, can never now, as they might once have been, be laid upon the altar of the living God. That blessed privilege, as regards those hours, is for ever lost to us ; that opportunity for ever passed away. Once gone, they are gone for ever ; and hours which might have been adding to the happiness of our fellow-creatures, to the increase of our own joy, to the glory of God, to the extension of our Redeemer's kingdom, to the jewels in our Redeemer's crown, have perhaps, how fearful is the thought, been employed in aiding others, by our countenance and example, in their progress to that gulf from which we ourselves, by the undeserved goodness of our God, may have so mercifully escaped.

Since, then, the advice of the apostle,

in its literal and strictest sense, cannot be applied to the time which is passed, we must endeavour to render it applicable in our own case to that which may remain to us. My brethren, who shall say what this may be? It is easy to number the days that have fled, but who can calculate what is to come? Can the youngest or the strongest here present say, that he assuredly shall hail the opening even of another month in the same health, under the same circumstances, or even in the same state of existence, in which he has beheld the present? You know that he cannot. You know that your sentence may have gone forth, that your hours may even now be numbered. When, then, I say to you, "Redeem the time," I urge it both upon your conscience and upon my own to delay no longer, but to begin in good earnest to live to God, to seek, if you have not yet sought and found, a Saviour, to devote not merely this Sabbath-hour, or the Sabbath-day,

to his honour and glory, and the soul's great work for eternity, but every day and every hour, so far as the absolutely necessary business and relaxation of life will admit, to the same blessed and all-important occupation.

I proceed, then, to consider from what you are to redeem the time which yet remains to you.

First, then, I charge you to redeem it from sloth and procrastination. An idle Christian is a disgrace to the very name he bears.

Did our Divine Master, while on earth, so occupy his time about his Father's business that he often, as the Evangelist declares, had not time to eat and to drink, and can you imagine that you are among the number of his followers, when you find time, perhaps, for little else? When every duty that is urged upon you, is too toilsome or too troublesome; and when you would rather sit for days in perfect inactivity, or in the most trifling

occupations of this poor, miserable, transitory life, than stir one hand, or engage in one labour, for the glory of God or the eternal existence which is approaching? How totally different would be the whole aspect of society, of our country, of the world, if every Christian, the moment he begins to be awakened to the things of God, were in good earnest to set himself to labour for God, and whatever his hand found to do to do it with his might.

It is fearful to think how often, when Satan cannot storm the citadel by open violence, he thus possesses himself of it by secret intrigue, and prevails to the ruin of a soul through idleness alone. You, who would start with abhorrence if the great tempter were to bring to you a gross temptation, yet fall willingly into his snares of indolence and procrastination. For instance, in the morning you say there will be time to read the Word of God, to pray, to meditate, to examine into your heart, in the evening, but in

the evening some more pressing occupation presents itself, and when this is over it is too late, and these great duties are again postponed. To-day there is little opportunity of doing good, of fulfilling, or even of commencing some work of kindness, or labour of love, which you propose, for promoting the comforts of your fellow-creatures, or the glory of God, but to-morrow you are assured that there will be time, and to spare; I need not say, that that to-morrow never comes. O how many immortal souls are thus slumbered, and trifled and procrastinated away, until the chamber of sickness hears the ten-thousand-times repeated fallacy, “When I recover, every day shall be spent for God;” and the bed of death alone demonstrates the emptiness and the delusion of it.

Secondly, I would urge you to redeem your time from vain and foolish company, and idle and unprofitable pleasures. There is nothing which tends more to

rob the heart of every spiritual affection, to deaden the love to God, to make all religious exercises dull and unprofitable, than these great time-destroyers. Thus the Prophet Isaiah, describing persons who so occupy themselves, says, "The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands." Will you ask in reply, is then the spiritual life of the Christian, as portrayed by the example of his Divine Master, and urged upon him by his commands, at variance with all the innocent intercourse of life? If we become really in earnest in the great work of salvation, must we give up our friends, our social meetings, and many of the greatest enjoyments of our present lot? This is by no means implied in the command to redeem your time from foolish company, and idle and unprofitable pleasures. When you become distinctly

and decidedly the friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, they who are not his friends will, such is the fashion of the world, very shortly cease to be your friends; while they who love him will infallibly love you. And so far from your being required to give up your social meetings, and the innocent intercourse of life, none really taste their pleasure in its least imperfect state, but those who meet in social intercourse, as they ought to meet, the Spirit of whose God has told them, “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Lastly, I would urge you to redeem your time from worldly cares and worldly business. Our Lord himself has declared that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,” and he exemplifies this truth by the story of the foolish rich man, who “laid up treasure for himself, but was not rich towards God.” If you will act faith upon the promises of God, and “seek

first his kingdom and his righteousness," his Word, that Word, which, although heaven and earth pass away, he has declared shall never pass away, his Word, I say, is pledged to you, that "all these things shall be added unto you." Let me then intreat you while you are labouring, as you ought to labour, carefully, sedulously, for the things of this world, still to redeem some portion of your precious time from their engrossing grasp. Give some portion, however small, of every day to God, to private prayer and quiet meditation upon the things which belong to your peace; to reading, carefully and prayerfully, his blessed Word. O, remember that your soul may perish in the very midst of the highest respectability and the most unimpeachable moral conduct; that you may destroy it as certainly and as irrevocably by sins of omission as of commission. Think you that the rich man of whom our Lord has told us, would not have bartered all these

recollections, and all the miserable comfort he could extract from them for one drop of water to cool his tongue.

Yes ! it does not require to have passed into the unseen world to tell you this. We behold too many, far too many instances, even on this side the grave, when the worn-out spirit, leaving a world for which alone it has hitherto lived and striven and laboured ; whose applause was its very breath, and whose riches its reward, for a world of which it has heard but little and cared less ; would at that moment gladly, O how gladly, exchange the richest inheritance which mortal ever squandered upon earth, to redeem one little hour for prayer and penitence and pardon and preparation for heaven. Alas ! how vain a wish, and yet how natural to experience, how agonizing to behold ! Would you avoid it, then, "redeem the time;" be earnest, be instant in your resolution ; "rejoice as though you rejoiced not, weep as though

you wept not, buy as though you possessed not, and use this world as not abusing it; for the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away."

A very few words, in conclusion, upon the objects for which you are to "redeem the time," and I have done.

The first great object is for the glorifying of God. This was one of our dying Lord's last declarations: "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." If you are a follower of the Lord Jesus, you must strive by his grace to be enabled to say the same. He had his work, and you have yours. His was the work of redemption, yours is the work of constant service and continued thankfulness. You must employ every hour you can redeem from the idleness, the pleasure, the labours of life, for this great end. You must passively glorify him by the meek and patient and thankful endurance of every trial, every sorrow, every affliction,

which he lays upon you. You must actively glorify him by your untiring efforts in every labour of love which he calls you to perform for his name's sake. You were created for this end, "The Lord hath made all things for himself," says the inspired word. You were redeemed for this end, "That we should be to the praise of his glory," says the apostle. And will you fail of the one great end for which you were created and redeemed? No! If you have indeed been born again of the Spirit, your unceasing inquiry will be, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?" And if there be an object proposed to you, by which, through your exertions, your labours, your efforts, however self-denying or unpleasant to the natural man, you may hope to glorify God, the cheerful unsolicited language of your heart will be the language of the prophet Isaiah of old, "Here am I, send me."

Above all, far, infinitely above all, you

will "redeem the time," that you "may win Christ, and be found in him." Every hour you can redeem will be made in some manner or other to contribute to this important and blessed end. This is the one great object of the believer's search on earth; to know more, to obey more, to love more,—the Lord Jesus Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the Author and Finisher, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. To adopt the words of one of the most beautiful of the Homilies of our Church, "Christ is the light, let us receive the light; Christ is the truth, let us believe the truth; Christ is the way, let us follow the way." And since time is passing, and eternity approaching, let us "Redeem the time, because the days are evil." "Let us receive Christ, not for a time, but for ever; let us believe his Word, not for a time, but for ever; let us become his servants, not for a time, but for ever; in consideration, that he hath redeemed and saved us, not for a time,

but for ever ; and will receive us into his heavenly kingdom, there to reign with him, not for a time, but for ever. To him, therefore, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour, praise, and glory, for ever and ever.” *

* Homily for the Nativity.

SERMON XV.

T H E J U D G M E N T.

Acts xvii. 31.

"HE HATH APPOINTED A DAY, IN THE WHICH HE WILL JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THAT MAN WHOM HE HATH ORDAINED; WHEREOF HE HATH GIVEN ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN, IN THAT HE HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD."

"IF Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain also. If Christ be not risen, then they which have fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Such are the declarations of God's unerring word upon the subject of to-day's high festival.

The resurrection of Christ, then, is the great, the vital fact of his religion, by which God publicly announced that the ransom had not only been paid for fallen

man, but accepted by his Maker; that the Saviour who had entered into the prison-house of the grave as man's surety, had been liberated; that man's debt was cancelled, that God was reconciled, that man was free. It has pleased God, therefore, that this great and blessed truth should be established by every species of evidence of which such a fact is capable; by the testimony of friends; by the confession of enemies; by the announcement of angels; by the declaration of God himself. So overpowering, indeed, is the mass of evidence, that it is not too much to say, that no single fact in the history of the world has come down to us with such an array of witnesses as the resurrection of Jesus. To dwell, however, either upon the details of such a history, with which you have been familiar from your childhood, or upon the minute and conclusive evidence of a fact of which probably no individual before me possesses a single doubt, would appear

a sad misuse of such precious opportunities as the present. Taking, therefore, these things for granted, as in a Christian congregation I feel fully authorized to do, I shall rather employ myself, in the endeavour to set before you some great and important deduction from the event which we commemorate this day, than to dilate upon that event itself.

The one great truth, then, to which, looking simply for help to the Holy Spirit of God, I would this morning direct your attention, as developed in the text, is this; the universal judgment of the last day: and I shall endeavour to shew, from the words before us, first, the certainty that this universal judgment will take place; secondly, the manner in which, including one marked peculiarity, it will be conducted; and, lastly, the person who shall come to be our Judge.

And first, as to its certainty. Had the bare possibility been revealed to us, that after this life ended, there might be some

account to be rendered of all that had been transacted here ; had the probability been suggested, that some who had once lived here below should stand at some given day before an unerring tribunal, and that each and all of us might possibly be among their number, is there a thoughtful man, is there a prudent man living upon earth, whose mind would not occasionally have looked forward to such a season, and backward to the events of his own life, that he might see in what manner he was prepared to meet it ? But, brethren, how very far does the reality exceed the conjecture ;—possibility and probability are out of the question ; it has been made the subject of a distinct revelation and assurance of the living God ; and this assurance comes to us not founded upon an argument, but upon a fact, upon that very fact which we this day commemorate : “ Whereof,” namely, of the great doctrine of an universal judgment, says the apostle, “ God hath given assurance

unto all men in that he hath raised Christ from the dead." Observe the strength of the apostle's argument. Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, made two assertions, both equally improbable to mortal eye, equally impossible to mortal agency. He asserted, first, that if the Jews destroyed his human body, in three days he would raise it up again ; and, secondly, that as surely as he should do this, so certainly would he do the same with every human body which ever had existed, or ever should exist, and on some great and coming day would summon all to his own judgment-seat. Now the first of these two assertions was, as on this day, fulfilled, for "Christ is risen;" the certainty of the second, therefore, is placed beyond a doubt, rendered absolutely unquestionable ; and our Church does not hesitate to profess it an article of her creed : "He sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the

dead."—"We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge." Not only is this certain, but more than this; the very day upon which the great assize shall be held is itself immutably fixed. "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world," says my text; it is not left to chance or circumstance to determine that day, but it is even now as irrevocably appointed as that day of which you have this morning heard, which was foretold 430 years before, and yet on the "self-same day all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." So is it with us, our great day is appointed. Every month that passes over us, every sun that rises, but hastens on that day of doom. It is one week nearer to every individual among us, than when he last listened to our Sabbath bells. And yet, with all this certainty, nothing is so sure to us as its uncertainty: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels that are in heaven," for "the

day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night."

All things will continue as they were from the creation, until the very moment when that last coming of the Son of Man shall burst upon an astonished world. The sun will rise that morning as bright as he has ever risen, not knowing that his work is done, his labours over; "rejoicing as a giant to run his course," but ignorant that that course is finished, his agency no longer necessary, his light no longer needed; that he will, ere that day's lengthened shadows have gone down, be stopped in mid career, and laid aside for ever; the moon and stars with their ten thousand splendours, will each quietly and calmly die out upon the morning of that solemn day, as they have done to-day, but never again to be re-kindled. "Man will go forth to his work and to his labour until the evening," expecting to return again at that evening hour as usual to his assembled family, but that evening

hour will never come ; it will be a day which no evening and no night shall terminate ; a day which shall never end ; a day begun in time and not to be concluded in eternity. Myriads of mortal eyes shall see its opening—not one shall look upon its close. For on that day the bright advancing sign of the Son of Man shall be seen in the heavens ; that splendour before which the light of the mid-day sun shall fade away, and all its glories be eclipsed. Then shall the trumpet of the archangel call forth the dead from the sleep in which they have so long been buried ; and earth and sea will give up their inhabitants, and every grave will open, and living forms shall be seen rising from those dark chambers which are now beneath us and around us, and the teeming earth repeopled, as in a moment, by all the generations who have lived and died upon its surface, with their progenitor Adam at their head. The vast population of the sepulchre, even

now outnumbering all who live, shall then present themselves; for the great white throne shall descend, and the voice of Him who sits upon that throne shall be heard throughout all space, and they who hear shall live. Nothing shall hasten, nothing shall hinder, nothing shall procrastinate that day one hour beyond the time which God has fixed, for it is he who has appointed it before the foundations of the world were laid. Brethren, do you doubt that such a day as this is thus immutably fixed? I own I have no excuse; I believe it as firmly, I am convinced of it as surely as of my own existence at this hour. But if you have one doubt upon this subject, did you never sit down quietly and take up your Bible and say, 'I will carefully examine this messenger from God; I will see whether the coming of this great day be so certain as priests and preachers would fain make it; and if I find it so, I will never rest again until I am at least in earnest in my pre-

paration for its approach ? Have you never acted thus with even common wisdom and common prudence ? then may God grant that you may begin to-day, that you may ascertain this great point to your own conviction, and having found, as you will find it written as with a sun-beam throughout the revealed Word of God, may it by God's grace lead you to the next inquiry, What part shall I bear in those great solemnities ?

There is a day coming for which I am utterly unprepared ; I have sins to confess on that day for which I know no remedy ; they are past, they are recorded in the book of God's remembrance ; I cannot reach that book to tear from thence the pages which record my shame ; repentance itself cannot avail for this. How shall I meet that coming day ? If there be one soul among you brought to this point at this moment, how gladly would we reply, and how earnestly would we pray that the Spirit of God might impress

the reply upon your heart, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” Yes! will avail to blot out every sin that God hath written against you, if only you seek it with a true and living faith. It is a little sentence, but O the mysteries in that little sentence! Of all the myriads who will stand before the judgment-seat, there will be peace in no single heart in which that little sentence has not brought it! “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.”

We proceed, secondly, to consider the manner in which, including one marked peculiarity, the judgment of that day will be conducted.

“The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God;” “before him shall be gathered all nations, and all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth. And the dead, both small and great, shall stand before God, and the books shall be opened,

and the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works."

But, brethren, let us not satisfy ourselves with this merely general view of a scene in which each shall bear his own immediate and individual part. It will, by God's grace, be profitable to endeavour to realize, as far as flesh and blood can realize, our own doings and our own feelings on that coming day.

Conceive the prison-house of the grave shattered to its very foundation by the piercing cry of the archangel ; personal identity again restored, the long-lost body re-united to its imperishable inmate ; all this the act, the miracle of a moment, and ere that moment has elapsed, finding yourself traversing the unbounded fields of space, and standing alone, as regards human help, or countenance, or support, standing, even in the midst of that countless multitude, quite alone in the presence of the Judge. A memory at that hour

supernaturally bestowed upon you, from which no single act, or word, or thought of the longest life will be excluded ; for our Lord has said, even “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;” therefore all shall be remembered, all rehearsed, all proclaimed ! Actions which you would not have performed in the presence of a child, thoughts for which you would have blushed to have found utterance before your dearest friends, all published then ; no mysteries and no secrets shall outlive that day.

But the great and marked peculiarity of the judgment to which I have referred, because it is so strongly predicated in the text, remains yet untold, God shall “judge in righteousness.” How solemn a thought ! It will be pre-eminently a day of righteous judgment, not a day of forbearing mercy ! It will be a day of strict and unerring justice, in which, wonderful as it may appear, mercy will form no ingredient.

Nay! be not surprised at this, do not misunderstand me, it cannot be otherwise; for, you will acknowledge, God will condemn every impenitent sinner, this will be strict justice; God will pardon every penitent believer who has fled for refuge to the blood of Jesus, and this also will be strict justice, as strict and as undeviating as the former. Our Church declares the same truth when she says, in the words of St. John, "God is righteous and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Only one attribute of God, therefore, is recorded in the text, as to be exercised at this great tribunal; it is simply, "He will judge in righteousness." Let, then, those among you who believe in the coming of this great day, and yet are content to trust to some undefined notions of God's mercy out of Christ for your safety and your pardon, think well of the assurance before you. You shall stand before a perfectly righteous Judge. There shall be no favour, as

there shall be no injustice there. You shall state your own cause and be your own accuser. You shall give an account, not of the merely exterior history of your life, but of the most secret recesses of your heart, a heart, the hidden iniquities and deep deceits of which we shall never ourselves, thoroughly know till then. You shall proclaim before enemies who have hated you, and the friends who have loved you, those acts, if such there are, which you have here, by every artifice, concealed from their eyes. Nor will these form a thousandth part of the confessions of that day. To all outward actions will be added, the untold and unnumbered iniquities which burn within : the defiled and vicious intention ; the unkind, uncharitable temper ; the over-reaching and avaricious desire ; the mean and secret jealousy ; the dark and malignant insinuation ; the sensual and carnal inclination, all fondly cherished, though deeply veiled at present, all then to

be proclaimed aloud before assembled worlds.

But the fearful catalogue is not yet closed, sins of omission in thick and terrible array, are crowding on upon the newly-awakened, the supernaturally strengthened memory. Duties left undone—through years and years of warnings, carelessly forgotten, and when recollected brushed hastily aside, or angrily discarded—will all be most vividly remembered then. Opportunities of good, of usefulness or kindness to others, occurring every day, and every day postponed or evaded. Prayer to God, absolutely neglected, or, throughout a whole life, coldly, formally, perfunctorily performed. The Word of God ! an unknown, unread, uncared-for history, left to moulder on the dusty shelf with other books, whose day and fashion have long since passed away.—The Sabbaths of God ! O how will the voice of broken Sabbaths cry on

that day against those who are now paying only a constrained and half obedience to them, or with a still higher hand and a more rebel heart, openly violating them by their week-day occupations, or profaning them by their pleasures.—The Sacraments of God ! to which all are so constantly summoned, where all may “ find grace to help in time of need,” and from which, I grieve to say, so very many still turn neglectfully away.—The Son of God ! O if there were no sins of omission here, all might yet be well, for he has a balm for every wound, a remedy for every guiltiness of the sinner’s soul ; he who deserves all, and more than all, that you can render of love and gratitude and unqualified obedience, robbed of his honour, shorn of his glory, the merit due to him and him alone, attributed to yourselves and your performances, while in your affections and hearts, the Son of God is subordinated to every trifling but

engrossing pleasure, to every worldly business, and, in some instances we fear, to every debasing lust.

But we are, lastly, to consider the person by whom this righteous judgment shall be conducted. “ God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.” With such a context, how cheering to the penitent sinner’s heart is this appellation; the apostle does not say, by that Lord; by that Almighty Ruler, by that everlasting Father, by that omnipotent God, but by “ that man;” to remind us that he who shall come to be our Judge, was once a man, a feeble, weak, and suffering mortal like ourselves, that he died upon the cross, that he lay within the sepulchre, that he experienced once all our infirmities, and has not forgotten them to this hour; nay, will not have forgotten them on that day when you and I shall stand before his judgment-seat. He then, who now be-

seeches you, by us, week after week, and Sunday after Sunday, to come to him for faith and repentance and pardon, to take his yoke upon you, and learn of him, that you may find rest for your souls; this is “that man,” who is coming to be your Judge. My brethren, you who are Christians in heart as well as name, you will feel at this moment the full meaning of that declaration of the apostle, when, after giving one of the most appalling accounts of the coming of our Lord to judgment which the book of God contains, he concludes with “Wherefore, comfort ye one another with these words.” Yes, the declaration that Christ shall be our Judge, is one to the Christian, exclusively of comfort, of the most soul-satisfying, the most unbounded comfort; for were we told that such a day must be, that such a tribunal must be erected, but that we might select, from all the children of Eve, our own judge, who should try us individually, and compelled

to judge in righteousness, should proclaim our everlasting sentence; I believe were this choice given to every soul among us at this moment, that but one cry would ascend to God from the lips of every true believer in the congregation, and that cry would be, Let me be judged by none but the Lord Jesus Christ. So certain does every Christian feel that there is no love, no compassion, no mercy equal to the love and compassion and mercy of the Saviour. "Wherefore comfort ye one another with these words."

But while I thus speak, I dare not think that all can thus derive comfort; that all can be pleased to hear that, "that man," shall be their Judge, whom some are openly neglecting and disobeying; "that man," whose Gospel is now preaching to them, but they hear it not; whose atoning merits are now freely offered them, but they accept them not; whose righteousness might now be made their own, but they desire it not. It can be no

comfort to those, brethren, that the day is fixed, that the judgment shall be righteous, and that Christ shall be the Judge. No, I see no comfort for you in the reflection, except it be this; that although the day is appointed, it has not yet arrived; that although the Judge is determined, he has not yet ascended the tribunal, that he is still waiting to be gracious, still employed in interceding for those whom he must shortly try, still willing, at the prayer of faith, to bestow every Christian grace, which on that day he will expect to find. But, "the time is short, the fashion of this world passeth away," and that which I now revert to as a source of comfort, may ere to-morrow's dawn, be the bitterest ingredient in your cup of recollection, for it may only rank among those blessed opportunities in which faith and repentance, and Christ and happiness, might all have been your own, but which have passed away for ever. For how impressive is the thought, that even

while we yet speak, the Judge is waiting for the appointed hour; watching the dial as the shadow is creeping slowly round it; listening till the last chime on earth has struck, that he may issue the command to the angel of the Revelation who shall swear, "There shall be Time no longer." Then shall all, and infinitely more than all, that we at present know be realized. Then shall "that man," who this day* "broke the bands of death," going down into death's own dominions, and rifling his very strong-hold in the grave, then shall he set his foot for ever on that serpent's head, and take unto himself the everlasting victory. Beloved brethren, what a comfort will it be at that hour for us, poor worms of earth, to claim kindred with the Conqueror, affinity with the Judge, to call to mind the day when he was made "One with us, and we with him;" to remember those blessed seasons when his written Word, his sanctifying

* Preached on Easter-Sunday.

Spirit, his felt presence, were among our happiest hours on earth, to recollect the days when we met together in his house of prayer, and united together in his praises, and assembled together round his table, and were partakers of the blessed symbols, and fed by faith on him, who appointed them, and shed the tear of penitence, or rejoiced in the consciousness of his pardoning love. O what a host of blessed recollections shall on that day fill the souls of God's people! But will there be no alloy? Our sins! The Judge himself has said, "Their sins and their iniquities, will I remember no more;" and we at that hour, may well forget what Christ refuses to remember. Will there then be no drawback to our joy, while standing before the tribunal of God, our Saviour, Judge, and Friend? Yes, surely, there will be one recollection, which nothing but an entrance within the everlasting mansions shall be able entirely to overcome; the thought that we

served the Lord Jesus so little, preached him so imperfectly, obeyed him so reluctantly, and loved him so coldly, while on earth.

The Lord pardon us for this our sin, and accept us in this our duty, and remove from us by his cleansing blood and sanctifying Spirit, before we go hence, and are no more seen, all that is unholy, ungrateful, and unforgiven, for his dear Name's sake.

PRAYER.

O holy and eternal Jesus, who hast overcome death, and triumphed over all the powers of hell, darkness, and the grave; manifesting the truth of thy divinity, the majesty of thy person, and the rewards of thy glory, preserve our souls from eternal death; make us to rise from the death of sin, and to live the life of grace, established in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, that when thou shalt reveal thyself on thy great and coming day, we may be enabled

to say, I am thine, O Lord Jesus, and thou art mine. O dwell with us, and let us dwell with thee, adoring and praising the eternal glories of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for ever.

THE END.

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